

MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT GROUP
IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

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ABSTRACT

The basic purpose of this project was two fold: (1) to set forth the theoretical foundation upon which the enrichment of the marriage relationship is based and to (2) research and set forth practical tools useful in a group setting in a local church that would facilitate the enrichment of marriage. Research into the theoretical foundations of marriage enrichment was confined to Christian theological and primarily humanistic psychological disciplines. Research into the practical tools to implement marriage enrichment was centered again in these disciplines with the addition of some Gestalt methods along with the humanistic psychological methods.

Included in this paper are chapters giving the historical background of the marriage enrichment movement, the advantages and disadvantage of the small setting in the local church to implement marriage enrichment and basic leadership principles that an individual and preferably a couple, might use to organize and conduct a marriage enrichment group in a small group setting (three to six couples) in a local church.

The methodology used to research the theological and psychological foundations of marriage enrichment was primarily reading and course work. Some experiences that I

have had in "spiritual growth groups" were incorporated into the theoretical basis, particularly the theological understanding of agape. The methodology used to research the practical tools useful to facilitate marriage enrichment was a combination of reading, course work, and participation in and leading many various types of "growth groups". My wife and I have co-led three marriage enrichment groups in the local church setting. Experiences of co-leading these groups plus many other "growth groups" primarily, but not exclusively, in the local church setting, have been incorporated into the practical tools listed in Chapter V. The dynamic of leading a marriage enrichment group contained in Chapter IV is born out of thirteen years of leading and co-leading with my wife, small groups primarily in the local church setting, devoted to personal and spiritual growth.

This paper is the only work that I know of that attempts to set forth either the theological or psychological basis upon which marriage enrichment is founded. The fact that marriage can be enriched is usually taken for granted in our culture but little or no research has been invested to discover the basis of this widely held hypothesis.

A basic conclusion of this paper is that from a theological standpoint the enrichment of marriage is founded upon the Biblical concept of agape and its inherent nature of expansion by sanctification. From a humanistic

psychological standpoint a basic conclusion of this paper is that the enrichment of marriage is founded upon the nature of growth and fulfillment which is an inherent quality of humanness. Marriage is meant to expand and grow in quality through the married years of a couple because agape, which makes marriage possible, is endowed with a sanctifying quality and human nature itself is endowed with a movement toward self-other actualization.

The marriage enrichment movement has emerged only in the last few years and has great potential particularly in the context of the local church. The movement draws upon couples with an already existing sound marriage relationship and the local church not only has a large existing resource of couples in this category but already has in existence the necessary theological foundation required to enhance the marriage relationship. The local church needs to develop its potential to enrich marriage beyond its present contributions to this field of endeavor.

CHAPTER I

THE SITUATION

It has only been in the last ten to fifteen years that an organized movement that could be called "marriage enrichment" has come into being. The movement originated within the context of the Christian Church and is now moving into the field of psychology and is beginning to be researched and emphasized by that discipline.

I. THE PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

A. The purpose:

The purpose of this study is to (1) present the theological and psychological rationale underlying marriage enrichment; and (2) to present theoretical and practical tools for implimenting the enrichment of the marriage relationship in a group setting in the local church.

B. The definition of the movement of marriage enrichment:

The marriage enrichment movement is characterized by the fact that it begins with and works with couples whose marriages are either ordinary or basically mature and mutually satisfying. The movement of marriage enrichment does

not attempt to include couples whose marriages are dysfunctional and characterized by having underlying psychological problems. Marriage enrichment works with healthy couples with healthy relationships and attempts to make ordinary or good marriages better. Marriage enrichment is not marriage therapy or marriage counseling. Therapy and enrichment are at times closely related and occasionally overlap but the distinguishing mark of the movement of marriage enrichment is its emphasis on starting with ordinary or good marriages and attempting to enrich their liveliness, adventure and joy.

II. THE IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

A. The importance of enriching marriage:

Marriage relationships, whether they can be classified as ordinary or good never fulfill their complete potential. The growth potential is an inherent part of human life and no matter how far a couple has grown in their marriage further growth is still a possibility. All marriages need to be enriched because marriages that are not expanding and growing are inviting stagnation and eventual boredom. Marriages need to be enriched because the joy and satisfaction of tapping into the marital growth potential is quite exciting and need fulfilling. Marriages need to be "lively" and enrichment creates liveliness.

Also, ordinary as well as "good" marriages need to be enriched because husbands and wives are the architects of the family. The maturity of future generations is dependent upon present day husband-wife marriage units. Whatever enriches their relationship makes them more fully functioning human beings. When the parent's relationship is one of growing maturity and satisfaction, they will likely have a positive and nurturing influence upon their children. The family is the unit of society and the husband-wife relationship determines the atmosphere and dynamics of that unit. To enrich a marriage is not only to enhance the present generation but to enhance the functioning of future generations as well.

B. Marriage under attack:

Marriage in our day is under attack. It is under attack by disillusionment. Many couples are becoming more disillusioned with marriage and are seeking alternate relationships. The percentage of married couples seeking divorce has been increasing for a number of years.

Serial monogamy, or one marriage and divorce after another, is an alternate style to the traditional marriage unit. Polygamy, group marriage, or simply no marriage at all, but enjoying associations whenever they come are further options. A man and a woman living together with or without sexual contact is a growing alternative to tradi-

tional marriage. Marriage is under attack even by some of those committed to it, because their sterile and dull marriages say to the young that marriage is the process of petrification. From many quarters the marriage relationship is under attack.

C. The importance of this study:

What people are looking for and wanting is a need fulfilling, mutual enriching relationship. Cultural disillusionment with traditional marriage should not so much be condemned as channeled into developing methods that enable traditional marriage to do its work and live up to its full potential. The institution of marriage doesn't need to be destroyed but it does need to be revived. Marriage has the potential of nurturing and fulfilling persons. The potential is there, but it needs developing.

The purpose of this paper is to lay the groundwork for nurturing marriage and helping marriage to live up to its potential. Very little research has been done in developing a theological or psychological rationale for the enrichment of marriage. The potential enrichment of good marriages is mostly assumed but the rationale has not been developed to any extent. This paper attempts to specify the ground out of which the enrichment of marriage is possible.

The enrichment of marriage has been part of the churches ministry for centuries, but only recently has the

small group setting for marriage enrichment in the local church begun to come into its own. Some, but not a great deal of information is available to the local church pastor that gives the necessary tools for launching and leading a marriage enrichment group in the local church's setting. This study is an attempt to add to what little literature there is at present and to give the pastor some theoretical and practical tools for launching a group.

Also not a great deal has been done to specify the dimensions of a marriage relationship that call for enrichment. This study attempts to contribute to the marriage enrichment movement by spelling out, not all, but a number of dimensions of marriage that a group needs to focus on in order to facilitate the enrichment of marriage.

D. Marriage enrichment potential of the local church:

The marriage enrichment movement originated within the context of the church. Its present day activities are mainly centered in the church setting and the great potential of the movement will probably remain within the context of the church because no other institution in the world has such a large resource of existing ordinary or good marriages. It is marriages of this sort that lend themselves to the marriage enrichment movement. Also, the dynamic of love is not only the basis of good marriages but the ingredient necessary for marriage enrichment. No other institution holds love in such high regard and places it at the center

of its values and activities. The marriage enrichment movement is a natural for the church. For the church to emphasize and lead the marriage enrichment movement would not only help fulfill its own age old goals of ministry to persons but would contribute to the enhancement of the world community by helping couples and families along the road of human fulfillment.

III. REVIEW OF THE MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT MOVEMENT

A. The Past:

The state of marriage has always been esteemed by the Christian Church. Marriage is not seen as a rule for all persons, but if it is entered into by persons of faith it is viewed as, "a special divine calling, a gift, and grace."¹ Because marriage is held in such high esteem, the Christian Church through the centuries has been basically, a positive force in the nurture of marriage. The Roman Catholic Church affirms marriage by the fact that it is considered a Sacrament.

Historically, the church has nurtured marriage, particularly through the Sunday morning worship service. Normally, earning a living requires that couples spend much time away from each other, but corporate worship has brought couples together for centuries, at least physically, and

¹ Karl Barth, On Marriage (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1968), p. 1.

helped to solidify the marriage relationship by helping couples focus their lives on important issues, purposes, goals, and resources.

Class meetings are conducted in the German Methodist Church in the present day with the topic, from time to time, centering on the growth and enhancement of marriage. The Christian Church, through its traditional activities of worship, adult and youth groups, prayer and Bible study meetings, social and recreational activities, has done much to foster the enrichment of marriage relationships.

B. Present day activities:

The marriage enrichment movement in the United States is organized nationally by three religious bodies, the United Methodists, the Quakers, and the Roman Catholic Church. The United Methodist Church uses the term "Marriage Communication Labs" to describe its work. The Quaker project is called "Marriage Enrichment Retreats", and the Roman Catholic movement is called "Marriage Encounter."

The United Methodist Church's "Marriage Communication Lab" was originated by Leon and Antoinette Smith and has been in the process of development for ten years. The Smiths have trained more than 350 couples to lead these labs. These couples include a number from other denominations who have trained an additional 150 to 200 couples in their de-

nominations who have developed and conducted their own Marriage Communication Lab programs in their respective denominations. Based on reports of leader couples, the Smiths estimate "that between 8,000 and 10,000 couples participate in Marriage Communication Labs each year."²

The Smiths state that the

purpose of a Marriage Communication Lab is to make good marriages better - to assist couples who have fairly satisfying marriages to improve their relationships. It is not for troubled marriages that need therapy. A Marriage Communication Lab is not a substitute for counseling. But we have found that it has the potential of preventing problems and strengthening couples to face problems when they do arise.³

Marriage Communication Labs deal with such concerns as communication, sexual fulfillment, role expectations, identity and intimacy, positive and negative feelings, spiritual life, and goal setting. Methods involve collages, drawing pictures, feeding one another, and making use of films, role cards, fantasy, and worship experiences. Typically a Marriage Communication Lab is a 48 hour experience involving a couple-leader and five or six couples. A requirement for a couple to be trained as a leader-couple of a Lab is that one of the spouses must be professionally

²Antoinette and Leon Smith, Marriage Communication Lab, a mimeographed newsletter.

³Ibid.

trained in the helping field.⁴

The Quaker project, "Marriage Enrichment Retreats" dates back formally to 1969. David Mace delivered the Rufus Jones Lecture on "Marriage as Vocation" in 1968. The impact of the lecture resulted in the Religion Education Committee of the Friends General Conference sponsoring a project to train couples selected by yearly meetings to lead marriage enrichment programs in their own regions. The first group was trained in 1969 and the second in 1971. David and Vera Mace led these training retreats.

After seven years of leading marriage retreats the Maces began to train lay couple leaders and report that they are "entirely satisfied" with the results and that they have been "justified in taking such a calculated risk."⁵

One difference between the Quaker and United Methodist movements is that the former train, on a highly selective basis, lay couples to become retreat leaders, whereas the latter train only couples where one spouse is professionally trained in a helping field.

⁴Further information regarding the Labs can be obtained by writing Dr. Leon Smith, Director, Educational Ministries in Marriage, The United Methodist Church, P. O. Box 840, Nashville, TN 37202.

⁵David and Vera Mace, Marriage Enrichment Retreats - Story of a Quaker Project (Philadelphia: Friends General Conference), p. 13.

Actually, the Maces began retreats for marriage couples in 1962 at the Kirkridge Retreat Center. In 1962 they held a five day retreat for Methodist Ministers and their wives that eventually resulted in the development of the Methodist's "Marriage Communication Lab."

The Maces, as a result of these retreats, came to the conclusion that:

(1) Only a small number of marriages were realizing their full potential, (2) Most couples want a "relationship-in-depth" but early in their married life find themselves "blocked," (3) as time passes they get "locked-into" this self-defeating interaction and (4) their tragedy could be avoided if couples had a clearer concept of the task of marriage and did not have to struggle in almost total isolation from other couples.⁶

The Marriage Enrichment Retreats usually involve six to nine couples on a Friday through Sunday schedule. There are no requirements regarding age, race, vocation, education or socio-economic status. The only requirement is for a couple to have a basically sound marriage. The retreats involve a "rolling agenda," which is a record compiled by the members of what they want to deal with. The phrase "making yourself vulnerable" is emphasized to encourage trust and openness. Facilitating exercises involve drawing pictures by couples, of their marriages, and sharing, dancing to express mood and feelings, private dialogues to discuss controversial subjects and later reporting to the group, "dia-

⁶Ibid., p. 7.

logues" by a couples volunteer and group debriefing, "fish-bowling," an alter ego exercise to facilitate deeper levels of communicating, spouse affirmation, etc.⁷

The Maces have organized a national "Association of Couples for Marriage Enrichment" (ACME). Membership is open to any couple, either married or preparing for marriage, who want to promote marriage enrichment.⁸

The Roman Catholic movement is called "Marriage Encounter." The movement began in Spain in 1965 and was called the Encuentro Conyugal. It was developed over a period of ten years by the Rev. Gabriel Calvo and a group of couples belonging to the Christian Family Movement. Father Calvo and some of the couples working with him brought the Encounter to the United States in 1967 at a summer convention of the Christian Family Movement at Notre Dame University.

"Basically, the Marriage Encounter is an international movement with a religious base, designed to make good

⁷Further information regarding Marriage Enrichment Retreats can be obtained by writing Friends General Conference, 1520 Race St., Philadelphia, PA 19102.

⁸Information and membership forms can be obtained by writing to, ACME, 403 S. Hawthorne Rd., Winston-Salem, NC 27103

marriages better."⁹ A group of couples meets from Friday through Sunday, usually at a religious retreat house, learning and applying concepts and techniques designed to improve and deepen communication between husband and wife. Participants are urged to recall in a personal way the reasons they are together, what they mean to each other, and most of all, "how God fits into their lives."¹⁰ Feelings, experiences and honest communication are key elements of the retreats.¹¹

Continuing with the Church's involvement in the marriage enrichment movement it needs to be stated that in the writer's opinion one of the nation's leading authorities in the area of marriage enrichment is Dr. Howard Clinebell of the School of Theology at Claremont, Claremont, California. Clinebell has developed a course on the enrichment of marriage at the theological graduate level, has included a chapter in "Marriage Growth Groups" in his book, The People Dynamic and has developed a number of cassette tapes, published by Harper

⁹Antoinette Bosco, Marriage Encounter (St. Meinrad, IN: Abby Press, 1972), p. 2.

¹⁰Ibid., inside cover.

¹¹Further information regarding Marriage Encounter can be obtained by reading the book Marriage Encounter by Antoinette Bosco which is a description of the Roman Catholic movement or by writing to: Marriage Encounter, 5305 W. Foster Ave., Chicago, IL 90630.

and Row and Abingdon Press respectively, on facilitating growth groups and marriage enrichments events. Dr. Clinebell and his wife Charlotte have co-authored a book The Intimate Marriage which is one of the few dealing exclusively with the enrichment of marriage. The Clinebells have led various retreats and workshops around the country on marriage enrichment.

Dr. Douglas Wineir along with June and Taylor McConnell of Garrett-Evangelical Seminary have done work in the area of marriage enrichment.

Dr. & Mrs. David Chamberlin, a former United Methodist clergy couple, have developed marriage enrichment programs for church couples. Their enrichment programs include a "Ten Week Marriage Enrichment Group," a "Five Hour Adventure in Marriage" and a "Fifteen Hour Weekend for Couples." The enrichment sessions, have as a base, Dr. Chamberlin's concept of "How Jesus Loved."¹²

Dr. Reuel Howe, of the Institute for Advanced Pastoral Studies-Detroit, has done some work in the area of personal growth and professional development for pastors and wives.

Yokefellows, Inc., of Berlingame, California has

¹²A leaders guide involving notes to leaders, publicity suggestions and detailed instructions can be obtained by writing to: Dr. David Chamberlin, 1355 Stratford Court, Del Mar, CA 92014.

just developed growth group tests for couples. Yokefellows is a non-denominational organization headed by Cecil Osborne, a Baptist clergyman. Yokefellow resources can be obtained by writing to Yokefellows, Inc., 209 Park Rd., Burlingame, Calif.

The Rev. Richard Wilke, a United Methodist Clergyman has done extensive work in marriage group counseling and has written a book on the subject.¹³ He has also developed a set of six tapes on marriage counseling. His work borders between marriage counseling and marriage enrichment.

The following works in the area of marriage enrichment are not church related.

Urban G. Steinmet of the Upper Penninsula Family Life Bureau, Escanaba, Michigan has developed a "Marriage Enrichment Program" which includes a lecture series on thirty-three and a third records.

"The Minnesota Couples Communication Program" of Minneapolis, Minnesota has published a book by that name and trains couple-leaders to lead four, three hour sessions aimed at marriage enrichment through improved communication. Their training seminars are held across the country.

Family Life Publications of Saluda, North Carolina

¹³Richard Wilke, The Pastor and Marriage Group Counseling (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974).

has developed a number of psychological tests designed to nurture the marriage relationship. Tests include, Love Attitude Inventory, Marital Communication, Marriage Adjustment Form, Marriage Role Expectation Inventory, Courtship Analysis, and others.

"Successful Marriage" of Kansas City, Missouri distributes a monthly newsletter by that name and has as its purpose the offering of "practical information to help make your marriage work." As well as the newsletter, they offer booklets, cassettes, and various study programs that can be used by couples to nurture the marriage relationship.

The book More Joy In Your Marriage by Dr. Herbert Otto should not be overlooked.¹⁴ The book is a catalog of specific activities for couples to carry out, designed to enrich marriage. Many of the activities were contributed by members of his Human Potentialities classes at the University of Utah and by participants and leaders of classes entitled "Developing Personal Potential," sponsored by the University of California at Los Angeles. A summary of Dr. Otto's research in the area of marriage enrichment appeared in the April 1975 issue of Family Coordinator published by the National Council on Family Relations.

¹⁴Herbert A. Otto, More Joy in Your Marriage (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1969).

CHAPTER II

BASIS FOR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

In this chapter the basis for the enrichment of the marriage relationship will be examined from the theological and psychological (humanistic) viewpoints. This paper maintains that the Christian theological rationale for marriage enrichment is love and the psychological rationale is rooted in growth theory. The chapter begins by stating the theological concept of love and then moves to the present growth theory of humanistic psychology. The final section of the chapter deals with an evaluation of the theological and psychological rationale for marriage enrichment and a synthesis of the two.

1. THEOLOGICAL RATIONALE FOR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

A. Love, the basis for marriage enrichment:

1. The nature of agape in the New Testament. The Greeks had many words to describe love. Two primary words used for love were, (1) "eros" which meant erotic love or striving after worth to possess it for oneself and (2) "philia" which denoted brotherly care and affection. Agape, another Greek word for love was little used and vaguely defined. It denoted care but lacked the warmth of philia

and the striving character of eros.

The fact that agape was vague in the Greek mind could very well be the reason the New Testament writers choose the word agape as the primary word in the New Testament to convey the nature of divine love. The vagueness of the word allowed the early church writers to give the word significant meaning within a Christian framework.

For the New Testament writers God discloses himself in agape. The agape of God, "becomes the suffering, self-giving love of the merciful God for sinners, actualized when God gives his only son to share the human lot, to suffer the limitations of human existence and to die that the world might be reconciled to him."¹ "Agape," says Reinhold Niebuhr, is "sacrificial love."² Agape is love given freely for the sake of the other and is heedless of reward or response. Agape is the "spontaneous, unmotivated, uncalculated, self-giving of the Holy God, regardless of the value of its object."³ But agape is more than unlimited self-giving, it is also the spirit of communion that wills the divine relationship between Father and Son as the ground the pattern of all relationships. Agape in communion creates an attitude and atmosphere that is intimate and creative. Agape

¹Daniel Williams, The Spirit and the Forms of Love (New York: Harper and Row, 1968), p. 37.

²Ibid., p. 193

³Ibid., p. 37

wills and establishes this kind of positive communion.

Agape in the New Testament has an eschatological dimension woven into an historical context. An aspect of agape is its willingness to await consumation. Agape overcomes fear and defeat now (Romans 8) but what love may do and will do, what creative and redemptive work lies ahead, can only be known partially in history and will not be fully known until the "end".⁴ The decisive expression of agape has been given in Jesus, but what God has begun in him is not yet finished. Agape is a process where full disclosure and consumation is yet to be. Agape encompasses an eschatological hope.

In New Testament agape there is a repetition of the Old Testament experience of love.⁵ God's election love raises up his people into a covenanted fellowship, then, in the history of their disloyalty, his love becomes a patient, merciful, redemptive sharing in the life of his people and the will to restoration. Agape has its history in God's meeting of the concrete need of human beings.

The above records the broad brush strokes of agape in the New Testament. But agape is not uniformly interpreted by the New Testament writers. The following deals with the various interpretations of agape by some New Testament authors and how one author, the author of Ephesians, applies agape to marriage.

⁴Ibid., p. 212

⁵Ibid., p. 37

a. Agape as understood by the synoptic authors.

Love for God is the great and basic demand made by Jesus. He summed up in two sentences the meaning of the old and new righteousness (Mark 12:28ff, Matthew 22:40). Both are well-known Old Testament sayings, frequently and impressively emphasized by the Rabbis.⁶ Jesus, in the eyes of the synoptic authors, stands plainly in the moral tradition of his people. But he demands love with an exclusiveness which means that all other commands lead up to it and all righteousness finds in it its norm.

The possibility of love for God stands under a radical either/or (Matthew 6:24ff). To love God is to exist for Him as a slave for his lord (Luke 17:7ff). Love is to listen faithfully and obediently to his orders, to place oneself under His lordship, to value above all else the realization of this lordship (Matthew:6:33). It also means to base one's whole being on God, to cling to Him with unreserved confidence, to leave with Him all care or final responsibility and to live by His hand.⁷

The agape of God in the synoptics means forgiveness and people are to deal with each other as God has dealt with them. Agape means forgiving "seventy times seven" (Matthew

⁶Ethelbert Stauffer, "ἄγαπῃ," in Gerhard Kittel (ed.) Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans 1964), I, p. 44.

⁷Ibid., I, p. 45.

18:21-22). Agape means humanitarian service. The parable of the Good Samaritan is a primary teaching of Jesus. It is only accidental that the word "love" does not actually appear in the parable. Jesus here presents an effective picture of love at work, concretely serving a neighbor in his need. Love, in the parable, is not only an attitude but a way of life. Love requires the real expenditure of one's time, effort, and resources.⁸

Agape also means "evangelism in its truest sense."⁹ What is even more important than material well being is the inner state that Jesus called "life". To lead persons to love God and their neighbor as themselves is the highest gift of all. "To create this inner life of fellowship with God is the final task of the loving spirit."¹⁰

Divine love reveals itself in self giving but love is also a state of being, an attitude. Jesus taught, "You have heard that it was said to men of old, 'you shall not kill...', but I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be liable to judgement," (Matthew 5:21-22). A fundamental conception of Jesus, as understood by the synoptic authors, is that lust, anger and resentment are wrong because a very different spirit should dwell in the inner life. "It

⁸Victor Furnish, The Love Command in the New Testament (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1972), p. 23.

⁹Harvie Branscomb, The Message of Jesus (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1960), pp. 113-114.

¹⁰Ibid.

cannot be too often repeated that Jesus did not intend for men merely to refrain from murder and its like, but he wanted them to become loving individuals."¹¹ Love is an inner attitude and atmosphere that eliminates contrary impulses.

What is a distinctive characteristic of Jesus teachings on love? It is not the "Golden Rule," (Matthew 7:12, Luke 6:31). Albrecht Dihle has shown that this teaching is present outside and prior to Jesus teachings.¹² It is not love as depicted in the parable of the Good Samaritan. The idea that love ought to be the governing principle in human relationships did not originate with Jesus, and within Judaism one finds other teachers who in one way or another single out love (Lev. 19:18) as the sum of the law's requirements. Nor is the distinction found in the Great Commandment for Jesus picks this up from Deu. 6:5 and Lev. 19:18. Victor Furnish finds the distinctive characteristic of love in Jesus teachings to be his commandment to love the enemy. This "Most of all sets his ethic of love apart from other love ethics of antiquity."¹³ Bultmann classifies Jesus words about loving enemies among those sayings where "if anywhere we can find what is characteristic of the preaching of Jesus."¹⁴ The versions of this teaching found in Matthew 5:45 and Luke 6:35 agree in two vital points.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 102-103.

¹²Furnish, p. 63.

¹³Ibid., p. 66.

¹⁴Ibid.

They both present the command to love one's enemies as a direct charge from Jesus himself and they both present a theological basis for this, i.e., God himself shows kindness to those who despise him.

For the synoptic authors love is found in the Son. The Son brings the remission of sins to which persons reply with grateful love and to which each should respond with an unconditional readiness to help and forgive. The Son calls for unreserved decision for God, and gathers around him a band of "storm-troopers" (Matthew 11:12) who leaves everything, follow him and love God with passionate devotion. He creates a new people of God which renounces all hatred and force and with an unconquerable resolve to love tread the way of sacrifice in face of all opposition and he himself dies with a request for the hostile world (Luke 23:24).¹⁵

b. Agape as understood by Paul. Agape for Paul meant the orientation of the sovereign will of God to the world of men and the deliverance of this world.¹⁶ The work of love is God's goal from the very first for Paul. From the days of Abraham God has foreseen a people free from the bondage of the Law. He has created His people by the sending of the Son and finally the Spirit. This Spirit, however, is represented in the great closing section of Galatians (5:2-6:10) as the Spirit of love (Galatians 5:22).

¹⁵Stauffer *Ἰστορία* I, p. 48. ¹⁶Ibid., I, p. 50.

Paul sees that a new situation is created by the agape of God. The great argument of Romans on the theme of the new epoch which has now dawned rightly culminates in a hymn which, beginning with the love of the elect for God, moves on to the love of Christ, and finally closes with the assurance of the permanence of agape (Romans 8:27 ff).¹⁷ The assurance of agape rests on three facts: (1) God has sent his Son and that this act of love found fulfillment on the cross in the self-offering of the Son, (2) God has called the apostles and continually calls those whom He has chosen, and (3) the agape of God is shed abroad in the disciples hearts by the Spirit and is a present reality.

However, it is not the goal of agape that human love should respond to God, nor that we should attain freedom for our own sake.¹⁸ Its goal is that the person who is called should place his life in love and freedom in the service of his neighbor. Agape in the human heart means a readiness for service and sacrifice, for forgiveness and consideration for help and sympathy, for lifting up the fallen and restoring the broken.

Paul's sensitive awareness of the dignity and glory of agape comes to its climax in the hymn of I Corinthians 13. This is the way love acts when it is genuine agape (I Corinthians 12:27 ff). The first strophe (I Corinthians 13:1-3) indicates what is false in the Christian life (speaking in tongues, wisdom, faith, self sacrifice) without love. The

¹⁷Ibid., I, P. 49

¹⁸Ibid., I, p. 50.

second strophe (vv 4-7) sets forth the positive character of love; love is patient and generous, love is not jealous or pretentious, love is not arrogant or dishonorable, love does not insist on its own advantage, is not irritable, does not reckon up a wrong. Love rejoices not at injustice, but applauds the truth. Love bears, believes, hopes and endures all things. Love is for always. The third strophe (vv 8-13) contrasts love with prophecy and gnosis, then faith and hope. All these belong to the imperfect, to live here and now, the life of struggle, defeat and growth; and their time will run out. Love too is for the future, for heaven, where God is who loves people with an everlasting love. Agape has an eternal quality. That is why, for Paul, agape is the greatest thing in the world.

Paul regards the love of God as basically one with that of Christ (Romans 8:37); (II Thessalonians 2:16). The loving action of God is revealed and executed in that of Christ. Those who would respond positively to God's call would find that love was the fulfillment of the law. Love, because it answers to the very nature of God in redemptive action, is the crown of every virtue: patience, gentleness, self-control, fidelity, kindness, etc. These are so many expressions of love itself, and this kind of love (agape) is the first fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galations 5:22). Thus, the goal of the work of divine love is the "new man".¹⁹ The "new man", bearing the fruit of the age (agape) has been

¹⁹Ibid.

saved from the wrath of lovelessness in the present age and has an existence beyond time and history.

c. Agape as understood by Acts and the sub-Paulines.

One finds the substance of agape in the early community of the sharing of goods (Acts 2:44-47), Stephen's final cry (7:60) and in the prayer meeting for Peter (12:5). The warmth and affection of agape is seen in the constant use of "brethren" (1:16), 6:3, 9:17), and the affectionate embraces of Paul and the Ephesians at Miletus (20:36-38) and the protesting question of the apostle at Caesaria: "What are you doing, weeping and breaking my heart?" (21:13).

Ephesians, thoroughly Pauline in tone and theology, emphasizes the love of God in predestination (1:5). The loves of Christians for one another is stressed in 4:2, 5-2, 25, 28 and 33. Love is associated with peace in the Pauline manner in the closing prayer for divine blessing (6:23).

In the Pastorals love is included in the list of virtues (I Timothy 1:5, II Timothy 2:22, Titus 2:2).

Women must pay the price of Eve's sin, and may win salvation by child bearing and perseverance in "faith and love and holiness." (I Timothy 2:14-15).

On the whole, the tone is colder than in Paul, yet grace and love belong together (I Timothy 1:14). God grants a "spirit of power and love and self-control" rather than timidity or fear (II Timothy 1:7), but this is not adequately related to the work of the Holy Spirit. "The final impression is that the author does not fully understand the meaning of

love as a dynamic power, the effect of God's Spirit."²⁰

d. Agape as understood by the Fourth Gospel. John allows love for God or for Christ to be overshadowed by love for the brethren which has its origin in God and its example in Christ. In brotherly love the circle of the Father, the Son, and the people of the Son constitutes a fellowship which is not of this world.²¹ The love of God is the final reality for the life of this fellowship, and abiding in His love is the law of its life.

God, according to John, is the Redeemer as well as the Creator of the world, and God stoops to win his children, patiently and graciously (1:17). God's will for those who turn to him through the Son and the Spirit is that they live in love, forbearing one another, caring for the weak, seeking the truth, finding simplicity and meekness of heart the way and the life. In Jesus of Nazareth (1:45) love had taken a human face and spoken by a human voice, for the sake of the scattered children of the Father. Love had offered the sufficient sin sacrifice and so had won fresh glory.²² Love had reached down from God to humanity so that people might rise up to enjoy life in God forever.

According to the Interpreters Dictionary of the Bible there are two distinctive elements of love as related by

²⁰G. Johnston, "Love in the NT," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), III, p. 175.

²¹Stauffer, I, p. 53. ²²Johnston, III, p. 178.

John: (1) the mutual love of the Father and the Son (3:35, 5:20, 14:31) and (2) the fact of the Son's obedience in love as the authentic mark of his divine glory (17:5). Yet, for the believer his supreme glory is that he should have died to redeem the sinful, and that he desires for them the love with which his Father loved them.

Agape carries with it a sense of obedience, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another" (13:34). The "new" quality is in the clause: "even as I have loved you." It is the quality of Christ's graciously condescending, sacrificial love that is to be the model for that of his disciples in their relations with each other. What is commanded is a rather steady, disciplined will to seek the good of others. The moral imperative for the redeemed is that they should walk in the way of the Christ, who is the Truth and the Life, following him who embodied in his own person and death the goodness that pleases the heavenly Father.²⁴

e. The application of agape to marriage in the New Testament. The New Testament says very little about marriage and almost nothing about a pattern for Christians to follow in marriage outside of the fifth chapter of Ephesians. But Ephesian 5:21-33 is profound in its understanding of what constitutes a "Christian" pattern for marriage.

²³Ibid, III, p. 177. ²⁴Ibid.

The Ephesians writer states that the basic pattern for marriage is the pattern that determines Christ's relationship to the church. First and foremost, husbands are to love (agape) their wives as Christ has loved the church. What does love mean? The author goes on to spell it out. As Christ "gave himself up" for the church so a husband is to give himself up for his wife. Agape in marriage means a sacrificial giving of self. Christ gave his all to the church and this kind of giving (agape) becomes the model for Christian marriage. "Nourishes and cherishes" of verse 29 continues the theme of agape in marriage. To nourish and cherish involves both attitude and action that sees and demonstrates the worth and preciousness of another.

Seen against the historical backdrop of the day where wives were not much better off than slaves, the fact that the Ephesians author applied agape to marriage is profound and it became a grand step forward for the cause of human dignity. But culture is hard to throw off entirely and the fact that the Ephesian author made agape the model of the husband's approach to the wife while making the wife's response one of "respect" (v33) toward the husband rather than agape exposes the authors cultural limitations. It takes the author of Titus to declare that women are "to love their husbands" (Titus 2:4).

The word "respect" (5:33) is literally "fear" The Interpreter's Bible feels that the injunction to "fear" is overpressing the analogy with the church's attitude to Christ; the element of religious awe does indeed enter into the latter

but not into the wife's attitude to her husband.²⁵ Chrysostom has a discerning comment on this verse:

When thou hearest of 'fear', demand that fear which becomes a free woman, not as thou wert exacting it of a slave... and what nature is this 'fear'? It is that she should not gainsay thee, or set herself against thee, as love the pre-eminence; if fear govern to this extent, it is enough. But if thou lovest her, as thou are commanded, thou wilt achieve more than this, nay rather, thou wilt achieve this no longer by fear, but love itself will have its own effect.²⁶

Wives are to be "subject" (5:22) to their husbands and husbands assume the authority in marriage because Christ is head of the church. However, Ephesians states that authority must be molded and guided by agape. The husband may not wield authority as a domestic tyrant, which was common, but his authority must have full respect and care for those entrusted in his guidance and protection. Toward his wife he is charged to exhibit the self-sacrificing love that Christ bestows upon the church.

Again, the sociological situation must be taken into consideration. In a society which knows not the institution of slavery the admonitions to slaves and masters have no relevance; and where the social and economic position of women is fundamentally different from that which was the rule in the ancient world, the relation of wives and husbands

²⁵Francis W. Beare, "The Epistle to the Ephesians: Introduction and exegesis," in The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), X, pp. 728-729.

²⁶Ibid.

can no longer be defined as simply subjection on the one hand and self-sacrificing devotion on the other.²⁷ Edward Selwyn makes some pertinent remarks here:

It is plain that for St. Peter the 'subordination' which the Apostle enjoins upon wives, is a matter of practical adjustment rather than of ethical principle...Further, being a rule of adjustment rather than a principle of ethics, the command to the wife to 'obey' is changeable with changing circumstances.²⁸

The Ephesian author in verse 21 applies the principle of "mutual subjection" to the marriage relationship, "Be subject to one another." This depicts the mutual expression of agape in marriage between husbands and wives. The spirit of mutual subjection is cardinal to the whole of the Christian conception of social relations and in verse 21 is applied to the marriage relationship. "Mutual subjection" is the anti-thesis of the spirit of self-assertion, of jealous insistence upon one's rights, of insisting without question that one's own needs are met. In substance it rests upon the example of Christ who "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant" (Phillippians 2:6-7). Paul also sets forth this principle, again in these words, "let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem the other better than themselves" (Phillipians 2:3).

The Ephesian author, despite his cultural limitations, was profound in his insight when he specifically used the relationship of Christ and the church as the ideal marriage model and centered the model in agape.

²⁷ Ibid., I, pp. 718-719

²⁸ Ibid.

2. A further understanding of agape and its application to marriage. Throughout the New Testament agape is seen as the outpouring of one for the betterment of another. No conditions or demands for response are connected with agape. Agape is the way God deals with persons and Jesus of Nazareth is the chief example and embodiment of Divine agape. A person's proper response to the divine initiative is love to God and love to fellow human beings. Love expressed by persons needs to take on the dimensions of agape and this love is a gift and first fruit of the Spirit.

But, in order to understand the nature of Divine love as it is understood and actively expressed by the authors of the New Testament, one must understand the motivation lying behind Divine love. The question needs to be asked, "Why does God love?" or "What motivates agape?"

The motivation for Divine agape is never concretely spelled out in the New Testament. But it would be consistent to say, upon examining the encounters Jesus had with people as related in the Synoptic Gospels, that the perception of worth lies at the base of all Jesus (love) actions and feelings. Also, the perception of worth lies at the base of Paul's endearing and intimate appeals to the early church community. Perception motivates feelings and actions and the perception that motivates agape (good will actively demonstrated and emotionally expressed) is the perception of worth. Agape means that God perceives us all as of priceless value. God sees persons as cherishable beyond description

and precious in his sight, and this perception is agape. Dr. Frank Kimper writes:

'I love you.' What does that mean? For me, to love means 'to perceive a person to be precious just because, and only because he is a human being.' 'I love you,' means 'I perceive you to be precious.' And it is obvious that if that is the way I perceive you, that perception is going to affect all my thinking about you, and influence every conclusion I come to about you. 'I love you' means 'You are precious to me.' Now the 'you that I am seeing as precious is not your body...your mind...skills...not your performance. (The you that is precious is the self that you are.) You were born that way. To see that, and to be grasped by the reality of it, is to love.²⁹

Divine love is the perception of infinite worth.

God seeing persons in this way and thus, acting and feeling the way he does, is called "agape" or "grace."

Anders Nygren maintains that agape is "unmotivated."

Agape is unmotivated in the "eros" sense, it is not called forth by value nor does it seek to possess value for itself. Divine agape is rooted in the concept of creation, it creates and instills the value it perceives.

Christian love involved good will actions and feelings but it involves more than these as well. In the Christian context, love is perception, the perception that sees unconditional worth in another. "I love you means I perceive you to be precious."³⁰ Love begins with the attitude that sees worth in another and ends with feelings and actions that

²⁹Frank Kimper, "Love Training," (unpublished papers, July 1, 1971), p. 1. "Love and Anger."

³⁰Ibid.

cherish another because one cherishes what one sees as precious.

The model of love in the Christian faith is found in the New Testament concept of agape. The Jesus of the Synoptics is a vivid example of living agape. He reached out in goodwill to people, he healed the lepers (Luke 17:12-19) and invited the children to him (Luke 18:16-17). He felt deeply for people and wept both at Lazarus' tomb and over Jerusalem. The golden thread that ties all Jesus feelings and actions together is love, the perceiving of persons as of immeasurable worth. Jesus gave his life for what he saw to be precious: persons.

What is it in another that love sees as precious? This is where about ninety-eight percent of the world misses out on love in the Christian meaning of the term. Love usually addresses not persons but the attributes of persons. Love usually addresses the body of another. The body is seen as precious. Love often addresses the mind of another, "You have a splendid mind, therefore I love you." Or love usually addresses some quality of another: friendliness, compassion, humor, good manners, etc. This kind of love is all "eros," it is all conditional. If any of these positive attributes cease, love ceases as well. This is normally the way the world functions and that is why the world is desperately hungry for love that is secure, lasting, and unconditional, love that is "agape" in nature.

Eros is not enough. "In eros the worth of the

other person is the object."³¹ Here, Helmut Thielicke uses the word "worth" in the sense of the value of another's attributes and qualities. "In agape the authentic being (Eigentlichkeit) of the other person is the object."³² Agape addresses itself not to the attributes of another, but to the "being" of another.

The love of God is above all the love which loves that which is like it. It loves in man the imago Dei... God loves in him (man) the buried image of himself.³³

Love sees as precious the "authentic being," or the "imago Dei" of another. Thielicke goes on to say that, "the real being of the person to which agape directs itself is not the imminent being, but rather its 'alien dignity.'"³⁴ To love functions and attributes of persons is eros and not love in the Christian (agape) sense.

To love another is to place the quality of preciousness on "who" another is, the "being," the "imago Dei," the "alien dignity," the identity, the self of another.

In agape...I do not...identify him with his functions, which he directs upon me. I see in him the child of God, and therefore I see him in a dimension which transcends his functions.³⁵

If one is to love in the Christian sense of agape, love must be addressed to the "authentic being" of another, the "self." Love sees the self of one's self and all other selves as precious.

³¹Helmut Thielicke, The Ethics of Sex (New York: Harper & Row, 1964), p. 28.

³²Ibid. ³³Ibid., p. 31. ³⁴Ibid., p. 32. ³⁵Ibid.

a. Loving one's self: Christians are commanded to love the self each is. The second great commandment states that one is to love his neighbor as himself (Matthew 22:39). The self that each is, the "imago Dei," and as such is worthful beyond description. To see the self that each is, as precious, is to love one's self.

Various dynamics block the loving of one's self. When a person identifies the "functions" or "manifestations" of the self with the self as such, this identification blocks a person from loving the self that each is and causes one to fail to carry out the second commandment. If one's actions, thoughts, feelings, capacities, talents (Manifestations, functions, attributes of self) are responsible and esteemed, then one will tend to love the self. Likewise, if a person does not esteem their actions, they will tend not to love the self that they are. How often does an author hate himself because his book is not widely acclaimed or the preacher hate himself because his sermon fell short of his expectations.

To be able to love one's self means a person must disidentify or "split" the self from its functions; "The self that I am at center is precious and remains intact regardless of my actions or thoughts." This is the Gospel, this is grace, this is "salvation by faith alone."

Another dynamic that gets in the way of a person loving himself is "contamination" (Harris). Significant others in ones life have shown disapproval of ones actions and feelings and this disapproval has been introjected and identified

with one's (unconditionally precious) self. This disapproval has been "swallowed" by the victim and is taken in as part of the self (I can't love myself because I am a bad person, I am dumb, I am clumsy, I fail"). Lack of self-esteem due to introjects cause much pain and needless suffering. Those who do not love themselves find their deepest anxiety is that if others get to know them deeply, it will be discovered that they are really unloveable.³⁶ People, in order to love themselves, need to reject the introjects and "extricate themselves from the gnawing doubts about their personal value."³⁷ This will begin to free a person to begin to love the self (the precious "imago Dei") that each is.

b. Loving one's neighbor: When persons begin to love themselves they begin to have something with which to love their neighbor. Love is the attitude that sees another as previous. Actions then need to be negotiated until they are congruous with perception. There is never any excuse for not loving another because love makes no demands of another nor does it have any expectations of another, "to love means to perceive a person to be precious just because, and only because, they are a human being."³⁸ When love is understood in this fashion there can never be any question

³⁶William Schultz, Joy, Expanding Human Awareness (New York: Grove Press, 1967), pp. 174-175.

³⁷Jack Dominion, Marital Breakdown (Chicago: Francisco Herold Press, 1968), p.68.

³⁸Kimper, p. 1.

of a "life that is not worth being allowed to live."³⁹

Those who would love others need to split the self of another from the functions of the self. People need to love the other's self, the other's "Imago Dei," but the self's functions, it might be said, are "up for grabs." If another's actions inflict harm, individuals are called to love the person but disapprove and be critical of their actions. If a person acts in a helpful manner those who would love are called to see as precious the person and also approve, affirm, and support the helpful actions. To split a person from their actions and to love the person and judge the actions is no easy task. Persons are finite and to know how and when to do what is most difficult and calls for a life long process of learning how to love in the Christian sense. God is infinite and can both love and judge persons simultaneously and in perfection.

Love needs to thread its way through rejection. People often times reject love because they don't know what love is. If a person is to love another they must thread their way through various kinds of rejection. In our task oriented culture to be loved is identified with hard work, success and approved actions. To be loved apart from these for no reason other than simply to be, is hungered for and dreamed of, but often rejected because it is not understood by a task oriented culture.

³⁹Thielicke, p. 32.

Love is also rejected because people fear the novel and would rather remain the same than to accept the new. To accept love would mean giving up introjects. Introjects are painful but sometimes are hung onto because they provide a reason for a person not to grow up. As long as a person rejects love, they don't have to love in return and take responsibility for their own life.

To love another means a person must learn how to maneuver through the rejection of love and help persons accept love. This must be done without violating another's freedom. Love is always willing (with sadness) to accept no for an answer as it attempts to help another accept what is given.

c. Loving God: To love self and neighbor is to love God. The parable of the last judgment (Matthew 25:31-46) clearly states this fact. Throughout the New Testament, to love persons is to love God.

d. Marriage needs to be based on love: Love is dealt with as the first dimension of marriage enrichment because love is the atmosphere in which marriage needs to exist if marital growth and enrichment is to take place. There is no need talking about improving communication, meeting personality needs, managing conflict creatively or enhancing joy if love is absent from a marriage. Love nurtures all the dimensions of married life. Fixations are shaken loose, blockages are worked through, antagonisms are dissolved and

pain is tended to when love is present. Love unites, love heals, "love covers a multitude of sins" (I Peter 4:8), love motivates growth and self-other actualization, love is salvation.

Couples are not hungry for love as passion, as sex, as approval of actions as good turns, politeness or ecstasy. Couples are hungry for love as affirmation of the precious self that each is - now - without demands or expectations to change. To love and be loved in this way is each person's deepest need and reason for being.

Marriage needs to be a life long school of love. The first task for a couple is to get their perception of each other correct. God, in and through Christ, shows persons the "proper" perception, the perception of worth. It is "proper" because it is reality and only faith can begin to encompass and apprehend ultimate reality, "my self, my neighbor, and my God are of infinite worth."

A second task of married love is to align one's actions with one's perception. A couple must get their seeing and doing in harmony. Trial and error is the key idea. All of marriage, and all of life itself is an attempt to get actions to fit the perspective of love.

A couple needs to be open to "feedback" and use it to home doing and feeling until these harmonize with the perception of love. Feedback comes from one's spouse. It can come from one's own intellect as one assesses the consequences of actions. Feedback comes from one's feelings:

resentment and anger point to the lack of love and joy, pleasure and satisfaction point to love accomplished.

"In put" is necessary as well. What constitutes loving actions? A person and a couple can learn from reading great books, from worship, from studying, from observing and making contact with loving people individually and in groups. To immerse oneself in and "surrender" to the person of Christ is to take a giant step toward becoming a loving person.

Marriage is meant to be and is a great opportunity for two people to grow in love. No other relationship offers such possibilities of intimacy.

To grow in love is to move from potential to actual self, from potential marriage enrichment to actual marriage enrichment. To grow in love is to be in touch with life's purpose and meaning. "Make love your aim...and so fulfill the law of Christ" (I Corinthians 14:1a, Galatians 6:2b).

The enrichment potential of marriage is most apt to be tapped into and released when a couple surrounds their marriage relationship with the atmosphere of agape, the attitude of mutual cherishment.

3. Sanctification in love as the process of marriage enrichment. How do people, and a married couple specifically, begin to love in the sense of agape? The Christian faith attempts to answer this with the concept of sanctification. "Sanctification is the realization or progressive attainment of likeness to God or to God's intention for men."⁴⁰

⁴⁰E. C. Blackman, "Sanctification," in The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible IV, p. 210.

Mark states that Jesus is God's Holy One who drives out all that is unholy (Mark 1:24). Jesus saw his mission to include cleansing men from inward uncleanness which makes them unfit for fellowship with God. Jesus ultimately gave his life believing in the possibility that God would use it to make real the emancipation and sanctification humanity needs. Jesus is the remover of the world's sin and man is destined to be like Jesus (John 1:29; I John 3:3). Sanctification is the process, inaugurated by and presided over by the Spirit whereby Christ's own perfection of love is realized in the disciples, (Ephesians 4:15-16). Sanctification will be complete at the time of Jesus final coming (I Thessalonians 5:23).

Sanctification was a dominant note in John Wesley's theology and it was his belief that God had raised up the people called Methodists for the express purpose of emphasizing this doctrine. In Wesley's thought the Christian life has two focal points: justification and sanctification. Justification involves forgiveness of sins. Sanctification follows justification in the order of salvation and denotes the ethical regeneration of man along the lines of love. For Wesley, sanctification was the process of the meager attempt of human love to gradually take on the nature of Divine love and eventual perfection was the perfection of love.

Justification is defined as "What God does for us through His Son," and sanctification is "What He works in us

by His Spirit."⁴¹ The former involves the deliverance from the guilt of sin through forgiveness, and the latter, liberation from the power and root of sin in human life leaving the word of love become flesh.

One restores us to favor, the other to the image of God. The former changes our outward relation to God, so that instead of sinners we become children, by the latter our inmost souls are changed, so that instead of sinners we become saints.⁴²

John Wesley would maintain that not only is love the point of departure of the Christian life, but it is also the object and final goal of this life, and he imagines a development towards even greater perfection even after death.⁴³

The reformers, Luther, Calvin, and others, saw perfection as the perfection of faith. Wesley saw it as an inherent ethical perfection in love and obedience. Faith was for the purpose of restoring man to the image of God-love. Faith was the means, love was the end.

I would just add that I regard even faith itself not as an end but a means only. The end of the commandment is love, of every command, of the whole Christian dispensation.⁴⁴

John Wesley believed that entire sanctification, or perfect love, could be realized in this life. But it must be noted that his concept of perfection was given the primary meaning of purity of intention. Purity of intention or a

⁴¹Harold Lindstrom, Wesley and Sanctification (London: Epworth Press, 1950), p. 84.

⁴²Ibid., pp. 84-85. ⁴³Ibid., p. 121. ⁴⁴Ibid., p. 173.

"single eye" is the mark of perfection. Sanctification could bring a person to the place of never intentionally or consciously violating the law of love. But unconsciously and unintentionally a sanctified person could still harm himself or others. So even in a person where love was perfected, Wesley would not rule out the need for forgiveness and further growth. Wesley's concept of perfection as being a perfection in love in this life must be evaluated as being rather theoretical. Wesley never claimed perfection for himself and even though he maintained that he knew persons whose perfection was a realized fact he refused to the end to ever reveal their names.

John Wesley's great contribution to the "people of God" is seen in his emphasis on sanctification - holiness - perfect love. It is the process, started by and carried out by the Spirit, whereby John 13:34 becomes a realized fact in the human heart and soul..."that you love one another, even as I have loved you." John in his letter, says it in these words,

No man has ever seen God, if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us. (I John 4:12).

Marriage, within the Christian context, must be viewed within the framework of sanctification. Sanctification is the process whereby the love of husband and wife is defined and perfected through the years into agape. Agape is the source and fulfillment of married love and sanctification is the process of realized agape.

4. Divine love leads to "Abundant" living. Divine love experienced and expressed by persons leads to living "Abundantly," (John 10:10). Jesus said "I have come in order that they might have life, life in all its fullness," (John 10:10 Today's English Version). God's will is that every person experience life as adventure, excitement, and joy. Life is meant to overflow. When his followers take up their cross, when they follow his "new commandment" to love as he has loved, life will be so invigorated that persons will begin to say, "we know that we have passed from death into life, because we have loved the brethren" (I John 3:14). Even conflict will not stand in the way of vitalized life because the good news of the gospel is not that a way has been given to persons by which to avoid conflict, but that the power of love has been given for the conflict.

"Abundant," vital, vigorous living in the Christian faith also includes a mystery. It is the realized presence of Jesus in the being of the Christian. Jean-Marie Peyriguère puts it this way.

This the great adventure, to live so that it is he who lives in us, who goes and comes, prays and works in us, who suffers or is happy in us, who loves others in us... Everything that is beautiful in us is of Christ.⁴⁵

Paul portrayed the mystery with these words, "...It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me" (Galatians 2:20).

⁴⁵Marie J. Andre, As I Loved You (St. Louis: Herder, 1967), p. 103.

Abundant life, the result of Divine love received and experienced, means life lived in liveliness and joy. It means "music and dancing" because the dead come alive (Luke 16:24-25), it means experienced mystery due to fusion with an unseen Presence and ultimately it means fellowship with and knowing God, "And when we find love by loving, we find God."⁴⁶

Our ultimate destiny is the "union of ourselves with God, Who is Absolute Love."⁴⁷ Those whose lower love is redeemed and sanctified by Divine love find not only the essence of their own nature, but find their Destiny as well and experience life as growth in love and vitality (abundant living). Agape sanctifies marriage and leads to husband and wife experiencing their relationship together as a process that leads into excitement and joy. Agape in marriage leads to a husband and wife finding meaning and fulfillment in each other.

B. Implication of the New Testament concept of love for marriage.

1. The ground of marriage is love: From the theological point of view the nature of God is agape. This implies that all relationships as well as the marriage relationship finds its own nature and dynamic in agape. Marriage partners

⁴⁶Reuel C. Howe, Herein Is Love (Chicago: Judson Press, 1961), pp. 43-44.

⁴⁷Marc Oraison, Union in Marital Love (New York: MacMillan, 1958), p. 15.

are persons, persons made in the "image of God". Marriage divorced from agape is a contradiction to human nature.

But the agape of marriage has a characteristic that distinguishes it from the agape of general human relationship. Marriage agape takes on the reality of sexual desire and fulfillment. Genesis 1:27-28, 2:23-25, Mark 10:6-9, I Corinthians 6:16 and Ephesians 5:31 convey the meaning that sexual desire brings about marriage between men and women for the purpose of sex. Sexual distinctiveness lies at the root of sex which brings about marriage. Because woman was originally a part of man and was split off (Genesis 2:23), sex is the desire to bring back into union the lost self and recreate the original union. Marriage between males and marriage between females is not adequate because the purpose of sex is to unify "split flesh" (Genesis 2:24). In the primeval myth males are not split off from males and females are not split off from females. Consequently, sex between males and sex between females cannot be the norm for sex because it will never result in the two becoming "one flesh". The distinctive characteristics of males and females are required for sex to fulfill its primeval intention.

Agape in marriage includes the sexual dimension, but continuing beyond this it means a pouring out of one's self, a giving of one's self for the enhancement of one's marriage partner. Agape is sacrificial in nature. Agape in marriage must take on the essence of the relationship between Christ and his church. Christ "gave himself up for her: and

"nourishes and cherishes" the church. Agape grounds and fulfills marriage. In the marriage relationship, when two people begin to get in touch with agape, they begin to get in touch with themselves and with God.

2. Husbands and wives need to see each other as precious: The understanding of agape as, the perception of priceless value, needs to be applied to marriage. The Ephesian author applies agape to marriage and with his use of the words "nourishes and cherishes" (5:29) he indeed approaches the concept of agape as an attitude, a way of seeing. But agape, as the perception of worth, needs to be concretely lifted up and applies to marriage as a model for "Christian" marriage.

Good will actions and feelings, even when sacrificial in nature, are not enough. They may be deceptive, finding their motivation in narcissism or "eros" ("If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy going...." I Corinthians 13:1-3). Outward actions of love that lack the inner Spirit of agape are no more than legalistic formalities.

Ephesians ties agape to marriage and this means that the love of marriage must reflect a mutual affirmation of the worth of husband and wife. From this (agape) perception will flow the Spirit of love in concrete actions and feelings of genuine goodwill. Without the spirit (perception) of agape the first fruit (love) of the Spirit will be missing (Galatians 5:22). A marriage relationship becomes fulfilling when it is

lived within an atmosphere of mutual cherishment (agape).

3. Sanctification of love in marriage denotes the process whereby the human love response takes on the nature of Divine agape: Agape is vital to marriage because it is from the "atmosphere-union-communion" (Ephesians 5:28-33) established by love that fulfillment flows. Agape creates nourishment (Ephesians 5:29), development (the parable of the talents, Matthew 25:14-30) and salvation (Zacchaeus Luke 19:1-10). When people receive the "gospel", the good news of the agape of God in Jesus the Christ, the process of sanctification in love begins.

The process of enriching marriage in love is called sanctification. If marriage is to be fulfilled through the years that a husband and wife are together, agape is the ground of that enrichment and the end results is perfect love (entire sanctification). Sanctification means that the marriage relationship is a process of love becoming. As individuals we are called to be remade into the image of God whose "substance" is love. Marriage is to be enriched through the process of sanctification - of love becoming. Initial marital love is limited due to limited awareness, understanding and experience. Its depths and richness needs to be put on and grown into. The goal of marital love is "entire sanctification," - love perfected into its essence - Divine love. Since perfect marital love always remains beyond human reach the process of love becoming needs to go on endlessly - enriching the marriage relationship in ways

neither "heights nor depths" (Romans 8:39) can every fully fathom. The process of sanctification in the marriage relationship is the central theological rationale for the enrichment of marriage among the "people of God".

4. Agape in marriage means a relationship that touches joy, excitement, and fulfillment: For marriage, the fact the Divine love leads to "abundant" living, implies that love in marriage leads to a fulfilling relationship. A married couple who has experienced their marriage covenant as a continuous drag interfering with interesting living, has not found the intent or potential of its true nature. Divine love is realized in "life lived in all its fullness". When divine love distills and redeems marital love the partners find their marriage endowed with adventure, liveliness and joy. God has placed in the marriage relationship the potential of excitement, of lip-smacking aromas of beauty and ecstasy. Marriage, when its love potential is actualized, becomes joy filled.

II. PSYCHOLOGICAL RATIONALE FOR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

A. Psychological growth theory:

1. Psychological growth, an inherent nature of being:

A basic assumption of humanistic psychology is that human beings have an innate thrust toward growth. This innate thrust is seen easily and clearly at the biological level: a baby at birth will eventually expand his weight approximately

twenty times and height four times by the time adulthood has arrived. On the intellectual level a baby's vocabulary will expand to thousands upon thousands of words by the dawning of adult life. The growth potential and thrust is an innate quality of humanness.

Abraham Maslow has done extensive research and writing in the area of human growth, what he calls "self-actualization." His research led him to conclude that growth toward self-actualization is both natural and necessary. By growth he means constant development of talents, capacities, creativity, wisdom and character.⁴⁸ Maslow illustrates this principle of growth quite clearly by lifting an example from nature.

Man demonstrates in his own nature a pressure toward fuller and fuller being, more and more perfect actualization of his humanness in exactly the same naturalistic scientific sense that an acorn may be said to be 'passing toward' being an oak tree.⁴⁹

Thus, each human being as a "passing toward" thrust. Each human being has the potential to become who they are meant to become. Human beings are meant to be a process of becoming. The process of becoming is the growth, the self-actualization process. Maslow continues and states that

all the evidence that we have (mostly clinical evidence, but already some other kinds of research evidence) indicates ... that there is an impulse toward growth, or toward the actualization of human potentialities.⁵⁰

⁴⁸Frank G. Goble, The Third Force (New York: Grossman, 1970), p. 57.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 58.

Throughout Carl Rogers writings the tenet of human growth possibilities is constantly seen. A person doesn't have to look beyond the titles of some of his books to see the growth potential concept, i.e., "On Becoming a Person", and "Becoming Partners..." His writings and clinical work are based on the tenet that man's tendency is

...to become his potentialities. By this I mean the directional trend which is evident in all organic and human life - the urge to expand, extend, develop, mature - the tendency to express and activate all the capacities of the organism, or the self. This tendency may become deeply buried...it is my belief however ... that it exists in every individual and awaits only the proper conditions to be realized and expressed.⁵¹

For the humanistic psychologist, a characteristic of humanness is the innate growth potential and thrust. A human being needs to grow, each has the urge to grow. Sometimes the capacity to grow is blocked and never has a chance to materialize, but to be human is to have the potential to become and "living is a process of continuous birth."⁵² Maturation (Fromm) is a steady unfolding of the full potentialities of the individual's human nature.

2. Growth can be either nurtured or blocked: An acorn has to have certain conditions exist before it can begin to grow and fulfill its potential of becoming an oak tree. The conditions that facilitate its growth include

⁵¹ Carl R. Rogers, On Becoming a Person (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961), p. 351.

⁵² Erich Fromm, "Values, Psychology and Human Existence" in James C. Coleman (ed.) Personality Dynamics and Effective Behavior (Chicago: Scott Foresman, 1960), pp. 522, 527.

placing the acorn in the earth and its having sufficient water, heat, sunlight and nourishment.

The human being likewise requires certain conditions to exist prior to the birth of the growth potential and during the growth dynamic in order to actualize his or her nature.

Arthur Combs emphasizes the necessity of a healthy, positive self-concept as one of the conditions necessary for the release and nurture of the growth dynamic. Self-actualizing people see themselves as "basically liked, wanted, acceptable, able, dignified, worthy..."⁵³ This positive self-regard releases the growth potential and the primary source of this positive self-concept in an individual comes from the introjection of positive attitudes toward them by the significant others in their life. If a person has been raised in an atmosphere that viewed them as worthwhile, a positive self-concept will emerge which will be conducive to growth.

From his clinical experience Carl Rogers states that "A warm caring" that communicates "I care," an unconditional positive regard is conducive to growth.⁵⁴ Rogers calls this attitude of caring "acceptance."

⁵³ Arthur Combs, "Some Basic Concepts of Perceptual Psychology" in Donald Avila, Arthur Combs and William Purkey (ed.) The Helping Relationship Sourcebook (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1973), p. 121.

⁵⁴ Rogers, p. 283.

Maslow is in general agreement among therapists regarding the importance of love to mental health.⁵⁵ Deprivation of love breeds emotional problems, while the presence of love and affection is basic for the healthy development of the individual.⁵⁶

Along with love, Maslow feels that self-knowledge and self-understanding are most important ingredients for self-actualization to take place. Also, the development of courage, integrity and self-respect are important for continual growth.⁵⁷ He learned from his experience with graduate students at Brandeis University that freedom (permissiveness) could be growth producing to some, but for others seemed to produce negative results.⁵⁸ To grow takes courage, courage to make one's own decisions and to claim the opportunities and consequences of freedom. Freedom is necessary for growth but if given too soon, prior to a sense of order-security-routine, it will produce negative results.

Basic needs have to be met and when met growth is encouraged. Basic needs include security, food, liquid, shelter, sex, sleep and oxygen.⁵⁹ But the satisfaction of these lower needs for food, security and clothing will not, in and of themselves, generate growth. Growth is motivated by a sense of values. It is necessary "to be motivated by

⁵⁵Goble, p. 82. ⁵⁶Ibid. ⁵⁷Ibid., p. 60.

⁵⁸Ibid. ⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 37-38.

some values which he strives for or gropes for and to which he is loyal."⁶⁰ Heros are needed. Every age but ours has had its model, its ideal. Our culture has given up the ideal, but Maslow would claim that we need the saint, the hero, the gentleman, the knight, the mystic.⁶¹

Maslow would claim that growth, in and of itself encourages growth, and the more one grows the more one wants to grow, "...the process of moment by moment growth is itself intrinsically rewarding and delightful in an absolute sense."⁶² In other words, growth snowballs and feeds on itself. Growth becomes an ascending spiral.

Many humanistic psychologists would agree with William James that

compared to what we ought to be, we are only half awake. Our fires are dampened, our drafts are checked, we are making use of only a small part of our mental and physical resources.⁶³

Maslow would claim that just as there is a trend in human nature to grow, there is likewise a trend to grow in the opposite direction, to regress.⁶⁴ When growth needs are not met, attitudes are triggered in the human psyche that begin to move persons along a descending spiral of regression. One of these attitudes is fear which can at times be quite regressive. There is the fear of self-doubt, of uncertainty, of exposing imperfections and weakness. There is the fear of

⁶⁰Ibid., p. 61. ⁶¹Ibid., p. 62. ⁶²Ibid., p. 61.

⁶³Ibid., p. 53. ⁶⁴Ibid., p. 54.

finiteness. Without a sense of courage, a will to take risks, regression or stagnation results.

Other reasons Maslow puts forward that will block growth include: man's instincts toward growth are weak rather than strong and thus, easily stifled by bad habits. There is what Maslow calls "the Jonah complex," defined as man's tendency to doubt and even fear his own abilities. This is a total misunderstanding of Jonah whose basic problem was disobedience of God, but Maslow has documented a human trend toward fear of one's own abilities even though his label (the Jonah complex) is uninformed. Cultural environment often stifles human development, habits become growth obstacles, and persons are plagued by the counter tendency of inertia ("the principle of least effort").⁶⁵

Jack Dominion in his book "Marital Breakdown" has stated some basic causes for lack of human growth.⁶⁶ If the basic need of feeling secure in the state of dependence is not met growth into independence and interdependence will be hindered. A child needs to experience "approval, affection, and tender physical closeness."⁶⁸ The deprivation of these needs will likewise hinder the process of self-actualization.

Dominian along with Combs mentions the importance of self-esteem.⁶⁹ The rejection of self as worthy leads to the inability to relate to others in later life and not only is

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 53.

⁶⁶Dominion, chapters 6, 7, 8.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 42.

⁶⁸Ibid., p. 53

⁶⁹Ibid., p. 62.

a hindrance to growth but could lead to severe mental illness.

3. Growth evolves by stages: The growth process takes on the nature of stages. From birth to death the various stages have their unique characteristics. Chronological and emotional age may not coincide. A person may be blocked in emotional growth but continue to grow physically. The stages are not clear cut. Adult life consists of growing on all levels and in all stages, jumping back and forth from one stage to another depending upon the need of the moment.

Erick Fromm states that there are two major stages of human development. The first stage consists of moving away from a period of dependence ... to the mature stage of transcendence and creativity in which it is considered more blessed to give than it is to receive.⁷⁰ The individual reaches the second level by (1) achieving a sense of union with others, (2) participating in the creation of life, art, and ideas, (3) achieving a new sense of "rootedness" in his creative relatedness to the world, and (4) by finding a sense of identity and integrity.⁷¹

James Coleman outlines the trends toward maturity as growth (1) from dependence to self-direction, (2) pleasure to reality, (3) ignorance to knowledge, (4) incompetence to

⁷⁰ Austin L. Porterfield, Marriage and Family Living (Philadelphia: Davis, 1962), p. 17.

⁷¹ Ibid.

competence, (5) diffuse sexuality to heterosexuality, (6) amorality to morality, (7) and self-centeredness to other-centeredness.⁷²

Probably, the person most noted for the concept of growth stages is Erich Erickson, who did his research prior to the advent of humanistic psychology. In his book "Childhood and Society" he records what he calls the "eight stages of man."⁷³

Stage I. Trust vs. Basic Mistrust. The infant is constantly "tasting (and testing... the relationship between the inside and outside" and in the process learns to trust his environment or develops a sense of basic mistrust.⁷⁴ Mothers create a sense of trust in their children by that kind of administration which in its quality combines sensitive care of the baby's individual needs and a firm sense of trust worthiness within the trusted framework of their culture's life style.⁷⁵ Basic trust grows out of a dependable environment, basic mistrust grows out of an undependable environment.

Stage II. Autonomy vs. Shame and Doubt. This stage is one in which the infant is learning to take hold or let go. To learn how to take hold and let go of things rightly,

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Erik Erikson, Childhood and Society (New York: Norton, 1950), chapter 7.

⁷⁴Ibid., p. 219.

⁷⁵Ibid., p. 221.

instead of appropriating demandingly, or eliminating stubbornly, is growth toward autonomy rather than toward introjection of shame and doubt of one's acceptance of others.⁷⁶

Stage III. Initiative vs. Guilt. Here the child either learns to take initiative in a socialized enjoyment of his new locomotion and mental power, or indulges in "acts of aggressive manipulation and coercion which go far beyond the executive capacity of the organism and mind and therefore, call for an energetic halt on one's contemplated initiative."⁷⁷

Stage IV. Industry vs. Inferiority. Erickson states that before a child can become a biological parent, he must learn how to become a potential provider and worker. The urge to create is nurtured by the recognition he wins for "producing things."⁷⁸ If industry is not learned inadequacy and inferiority begins to appear.

Stage V. Identity vs. Role Diffusion. The fifth stage is that of learning, as an adolescent, who one is and which direction one is to head. Questions like, "Who am I" and "What am I to become" are asked. The sense of ego identity, then, is the accrued confidence that the inner sameness and continuity are matched by the sameness and continuity of one's meaning for others. If the purpose

⁷⁶Ibid., pp. 222-224.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 224.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 226-227.

of this stage is not met "role diffusion" is the consequence.⁷⁹

Stage VI. Intimacy vs. Isolation. This stage deals with the need to find and be close to persons, of intimacy.

Body and ego must now be masters of the organ modes and of the nuclear conflicts, in order to be able to face which call for self-abandon: in orgasms and sexual unions, in close friendships and in physical combat, in experience of inspiration by teachers and of intuition from the recesses of the self.⁸⁰

Avoidance of intimacy results in isolation and loneliness.

Stage VII. Generativity vs. Stagnation. Generativity not only means creativity and productivity, but establishing and guiding the next generation. It is the parental stage. It's failure leads to stagnation.

Stage VIII. Ego Integrity vs. Despair. This stage represents maturity.

Lacking a clear definition, I shall point to a few constituents of this state of mind. It is the ego's accrued assurance of its proclivity for order and meaning. It is a post-narcissistic love of the human ego...as an experience which conveys some world order and spiritual sense...It is a comradeship with the ordering ways of distant times and different pursuits ...the possessor of integrity is ready to defend the dignity of his own life style against all physical and economic threats...death loses its sting.⁸¹

Lack of integrity results in fear and despair. Life has no validity.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 228.

⁸⁰Ibid., p. 229.

⁸¹Ibid., p. 232.

There is order in growth, there is design. But since no stage is perfectly completed before the next stage is forced to emerge, the adult throughout all their mature years relives and regrows all the stages as the existential moment demands. Here the Gestalt concept of "organismic self-regulation" is applicable.⁸²

4. Growth leads to self-actualization: Persons have a need to develop and realize the potential within them. Abraham Maslow's theory of motivation identifies this as the growth need or the self-actualization need. Self-actualization is the need for growth, development, and utilization of potential. The self-actualization need is "the desire to become more and more what one is, to become everything that one is capable of becoming."⁸³ Self-actualization is regarded as the "higher" need and consists of various facets. These various facets involve the need for wholeness, perfection, completion, justice, aliveness, richness, simplicity, beauty, goodness, uniqueness, effortlessness, playfulness, truth and self-sufficiency.⁸⁴

What are the characteristics of a person who is actualizing his potential? Carl Rogers mentions some of these characteristics he has found in what he calls the

⁸²James L. Walker, Body and Soul (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1971), pp. 72-74.

⁸³Goble, p. 41.

⁸⁴Ibid., p. 46.

fully functioning person.⁸⁵ The fully functioning person is able to live with each and all of his feelings and reactions. They make use of their senses within and without. They recognize that their organism is sometimes wiser than their intellectual awareness so they are more able to permit their total organism to function more freely in all its complexity.⁸⁶ They are more able to experience their feelings, less afraid of any feeling, are open to evidence from all sources and are completely engaged in the process of being and becoming themselves.⁸⁷

The fully functioning life, the "good life," the self-actualizing life is (1) open to experience, (2) has an internal locus of evaluation and (3) possesses the ability to toy with elements and concepts.⁸⁸

Maslow believes that by observing the best of humanity, the less-than one percent at the top, one will be able to compile the characteristics of self-actualizing life.⁸⁹ By studying the best that humanity has to offer one can get a picture of the human potential.

Frank Goble has summarized Maslow's documentation of the characteristics of self-actualizing persons.⁹⁰ Common aspects of superior persons include their ability to see life clearly, to see it as it is rather than as they wish to see it. Because of their superior perception, the self-actualizing are more decisive and have a clearer notion

⁸⁵Rogers, pp. 191-192

⁸⁶Ibid. ⁸⁷Ibid.

⁸⁸Ibid., pp. 353-355.

⁸⁹Goble p. 53

⁹⁰Ibid., pp.25-37

of what is right and wrong. Yet, they have a kind attitude toward humanity, the ability to listen carefully to others, and to admit that they don't know everything. Without exception they are dedicated to some work, task or vocation which they consider important. Creativity is a universal characteristic of all self-actualizing people. Creativity requires courage, the ability to stick one's neck out, and to be able to ignore criticism and ridicule. They have a low degree of self-conflict. They are not at war with themselves, their personality is integrated. They enjoy play and work and make little distinction between the two. They have a healthy respect for themselves, a respect based upon the knowledge that they are competent and adequate. They can resist their culture when it does not agree with their own point of view and all self-actualizers, with the exception of one studied that was an atheist, had a belief in a meaningful universe and a life which could be called spiritual.

Life can be meaningful, it can be productive, lively, joyful, useful, adventuresome, and creative. Those whose basic needs are met can enter into the process of becoming who they were meant to be. Life as a continuous birth process into newness and novelty is called self-actualizing by humanistic psychology.

5. Growth leads to "peak experience" living: There is a kind of living that is reported as,

seeing a formerly hidden truth, a revelation in the strict sense, a stripping away of veils, and finally, almost always, the whole experience is experienced as bliss, ecstasy, rapture, exaltation.⁹¹

Maslow refers to this as the peak experience. It is similar to Marghanita Laske's "ecstasies," William James' "mystic experience" and Freud's "oceanic feeling." But there are simple versions of the peak experience namely; fascination, concentration, absorption in anything that is interesting enough to hold complete attention. The simple version experienced by even average people might be triggered by listening to great symphonies, seeing a gripping movie, reading a fascinating detective story, or simply becoming absorbed with one's work. Through these almost universal experiences one can get a feeling for, an intuition or empathy for the so called "fancier high experiences."⁹²

What happens during these peak moments that crown the experience of self-actualizing persons? Maslow maintains that both the past and the future are given up.⁹³ There is a total absorption in the present. There is an innocence of perceiving and behaving. All right, wrong, shoulds, and oughts are gone. Fear disappears, self-consciousness and courage and strength assert themselves. Trust replaces trying, controlling or striving.⁹⁴ Full spontaneity is realized and finally there is a

⁹¹Abraham Maslow, "The Creative Attitude" in Avila, Combs, and Purkey, pp. 387-88.

⁹²Ibid.

⁹³Ibid., p. 339.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 393

sense of "fusion of the person with the world." There is a sense of oneness, "a melting into one" of the person and the world.⁹⁵

As persons grow and actualize their potential, peak experience living will be commonplace. Peak experience living will, in and of itself, be a motivation for further self-actualization.

B. Implications of the psychological growth theory for marriage:

1. Marriage is intended to be a growing relationship:

The humanistic psychologists would claim that growth is an innate quality of humanness. When two people are married, each partner brings with them their individual growth quality. A logical implication would be that their relationship, that they create via the marriage covenant, now takes on the quality of growth as well. Marriage is meant to be a corporate growing relationship because a husband and wife singly possess a growth potential and marriage results in a union of two previous separate entities.

When two people are married they hardly know themselves, much less each other. The average marrying age in the United States is in the early twenties, which means if a couple live the average number of years, most of their lifetime is ahead of them. Marriage can be experienced as stagnation, but it is meant to be experienced as a process

⁹⁵Ibid., p. 397.

evolving into ever greater dimensions of richness and meaning. Marriage is meant to help two people get to know each other and themselves better through the years. Marriage is meant to help two people learn how to carry each others burdens, it is meant to increase two peoples ability to care, to listen, to understand, and to shoulder responsibility. Marriage is meant to move in the direction of developing the ability to alleviate loneliness and to facilitate the growth of various talents and abilities. Marriage has within it a positive developmental potential just as the acorn has the positive potential to become an oak tree. This is an over simplified naturalistic point of view but its basic truth remains valid: marriage is meant to grow into its fulfillment.

2. A growing marriage relationship does not come about automatically: Babies born into this world need help from outside themselves in order to live and grow. No child lives very long when the nutrients necessary for life and growth are withheld. The growth quality of humanness, even though innate does not stand by itself, it is not autonomous and independent.

When a child receives from outside itself care, love, attention, warmth, self-esteem, faith, food and water, etc. the child's tendency to grow and develop will be nurtured. Withdraw from a child the nutrients of esteem, attention, goodwill, food, etc., and the child will regress and eventually

die.

The implications of these findings for marriage is that a marriage relationship will not automatically grow. A couple has to invest themselves in the relationship and in each other in order for the marriage to grow into richer dimensions. When a marriage is based on each partner taking from the other what each needs the marriage will tend to regress and die. When a marriage is based on each partner giving to the other what the other needs the marriage will be on a much firmer footage. Marriage needs to be a rhythm of both giving and receiving by each partner depending upon sensitivity to the need of the moment.

If a married couple wants their marriage relationship to grow they will have to assume the responsibility for making growth take place. By each partner investing self-other worth, warm caring, openness, nourishing concern, trust, insight, etc., means that a couple is assuming responsibility for making marriage what it is intended to be, a dynamic process moving toward fulfillment.

Marriage enrichment is conditional: treat marriage with tender-loving-care and it grows, suck from it basic needs without self investment and it will be self-other destructive.

3. Marriage evolves through stages: Just as there are stages in human growth so there are stages in the

"Marriage cycle."⁹⁶ Each stage, beginning with the relationship prior to the marriage covenant and lasting to retirement and death of one spouse, has its appointed tasks and goals. Engagement entails a testing to see if a marital relationship is possible. If this stage is successfully completed and an affirmative answer is forthcoming the next stage can be entered into on a firm footing. The next stage would be considered the wedding, through the first year or two. This stage requires, depending upon the need, an ability to manage conflict or promote an earthquake to disturb a peace-at-any-price stagnation. So the couple moves through stage after stage and if each stage is successfully completed the final stage of maturity will be achieved with a sense of integrity even in the face of the loss of one spouse through death.

Stages in the marriage cycle also imply inevitable conflict throughout the entire marriage life cycle. This is because no two people grow completely in unison and no relationship ever successfully completes the goals and tasks of each marital stage. Consequently each stage means doing the tasks of the stage and also moving back to complete "unfinished business" of previous marital stages.

4. Marriage can realize its potential and become meaningful: The full potential of marriage can never be achieved in a couple's lifetime but certainly intermediate

⁹⁶Howard J. and Charlotte Clinebell, The Intimate Marriage (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 105.

stages of satisfaction, enrichment and creativeness can certainly become an accomplished fact of a growing marriage.

A couple can grow in mutual understanding until a deep understanding of each other becomes the ground upon which their relationship continuously functions. A couple can grow, in their ability to feel and demonstrate kindness to each other, to the place where deep kindness becomes the base of operations of their mutual functioning. Further dimensions of understanding and kindness are not ruled out but these virtues become standard operating procedures for a couple whose marriage potential becomes actualized.

Marriage is not just a process of becoming, it is also a process that experiences arriving. A growing couple might well be able to say: "Once our marriage was riddled with jealousy but now we live in mutual trust, once our marriage was lived according to cultural expectations, but now we experience the satisfaction of creative relating." A couple, married fifty years, walking down the street hand in hand and communicating "I love you" not verbally but through the twinkle of an eye and a warmth of a smile demonstrate that their marriage has grown to the place where deep caring is the foundation upon which they function daily.

5. Marriage can touch "peak experience" living: What can be said other than "peak experience" is psychologically based (in the humanistic school) and implies that the marriage relationship is meant to culminate in "peak relationship"

living. Psychologically speaking, the marriage relationship is endowed with the potential of savoring living waters of inexpressible joy. The way is narrow and few are those who begin to experience the full potential of marriage. Yet the potential remains to intrigue and entice those who, hand in hand, would ascend its heights.

III SYNTHESIS: THE THEOLOGICAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL RATIONALE FOR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

The theological and psychological rationale for marriage enrichment basically harmonize with each other even though they do not completely agree. Each adds needed dimensions to the other and a working relationship between the two needs to be established.

A. Theology:

1. Theological rationale summarized: The theological rationale for marriage enrichment states the ground out of which springs the possibility of enrichment is love; love as it is understood by the New Testament writers using the word "agape." The process of the enrichment and refinement of love is termed sanctification. It is the attitude of agape, of perceiving another unconditionally as infinitely precious and acting in harmony with the perception that creates the atmosphere that make possible and facilitates the enrichment of the marriage relationship.

2. Theology's concept of love gives needed correction to psychological growth theory: First of all, in the medical-psychological field there is no comprehensive understanding of the nature of love, much less "agape." So vivid is this psychological blind spot that it seems that a conspiracy is going on to avoid research into the nature of love -- a basic element of humanness. The theological concept of love needs to be superimposed upon psychological growth theory. Human psychological growth needs to be a growth in love, a growth that affirms and acts on the worth of self-others. This will give not only a deeper dimension but needs direction to psychological growth. A growth in abilities and talents might be quite rewarding but thoroughly self-centered. On the other hand, growth in abilities and talents within the context of love would not only be psychologically rewarding but theologically sound as well.

Secondly, theology's concept of love reveals that persons are not so much motivated by an innate thrust toward growth (humanistic psychology) as they are motivated by love (theology). Persons have an innate need to grow, but it is a more basic need, love, that not only makes life possible, but awakens the growth potential and makes possible its realization. A baby is endowed with an innate thrust toward growth. But it is the perception and act of love that provides meaning to live, and thereby awakens the desire to grow.

And it is the perception and act of love that makes growth possible by nurturing trust, autonomy, initiative, and all of the "metaneeds" of Maslow's theory of motivation. A person is motivated to become their potential but it is the attitude of love that lies at the base of motivation. In the light of agape, psychological growth theory becomes a secondary, not a primary motivation.

Love always nurtures growth in either subject and/or object, but growth doesn't always nurture love. Growth may be attached to a person's demonic abilities resulting, at worst, in a world holocaust.

Man is moved to grow into his potential but it is the attitude of love-of the unconditional worth of another, perceived and acted upon, that makes growth possible and desirable.

Thus, the marriage relationship has a better chance to be enriched and to grow into all its dimensions when it is moved by the desire to love, than when it is moved by the desire to grow. To grow in love is more basic than to love to grow. The former is always self-other actualizing, the latter may or may not be. Love is the cause of growth and growth is the consequence of love.

B. Psychology:

1. Psychological rationale summarized: The psychological rationale for marriage enrichment states that the ground out of which springs the possibility of enrichment

is the innate thrust toward growth in human beings. It is the innate process of becoming, the growth into full humanness embedded in human nature that creates the atmosphere that makes possible the facilitates the enrichment of the marriage relationship.

2. Psychology's contribution to theology's concept of love: The concept of growth in psychological theory can give added dimension to the theological understanding of love through the realization that many of the elements that nurture psychological growth are in reality the theological concept of love translated into the day to day needs of human beings. By looking at a number of the elements that characterize and facilitate psychological growth a person can get a clearer picture of how to answer the question, "How might I love?" Early parental dependability and "sameness" (Erickson), thereby nurturing basic trust in children is agape applied to a (in the Erickson sense) parent-child relationship. Early parental "sameness" is self-giving in nature, enhances the life of another, and is based on affirming another as worthwhile, as valuable. All this is agape in concrete form. To fully "accept" another in the Rogerian sense is probably as close as the medical-psychological field gets to practicing agape as an attitude rather than as an act only. The attitude lying at the base of Carl Rogers "acceptance" is the attitude of unconditional positive regard for others. This attitude is in

harmony with agape even though it lacks the dimensions and rich imagery of New Testament agape. Psychology, within its growth theory, often reveals the day to day details of applied agape even though it does not recognize this fact. To accept others (Rogers), to nurture basic trust (Erickson), to affirm justice (Maslow) is to relate the essence of agape to everyday human existence.

A. + B. The Synthesis:

The theological understanding of love as presented in this paper, centered in the New Testament concept of agape, serves as a working hypothesis attempting to open the doors to the meaning and significance of love in the marriage relationship.

The synthesis of the theological and psychological rationale for marriage enrichment is that love (agape) moves marriage into deeper and richer dimensions and it is the psychological growth theory that can refine, on a day by day, decision by decision basis the form of this love in the existential situation. It is not psychological growth that serves as the basis of marriage enrichment, but growth in Christ-like love.

CHAPTER III

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE GROUP SETTING IN THE LOCAL CHURCH FOR THE PURPOSE OF MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

The greatest opportunity in the local church to nurture the enrichment of marriage is found in the group setting composed of four to eight couples. Koinonia is easily nurtured in the atmosphere of the small group. The group setting has certain drawbacks but its significant potential to nurture marriage remains intact.

I. KOINONIA AND THE GROUP SETTING

A. The small group setting nurtures koinonia:

The small growth group setting in the local church has a significant influence in creating among persons the New Testament reality of "koinonia." The growth group consisting of five to twelve persons is conducive to creating a sense of communion, personal sharing, mutual support, and commonality of experience. The New Testament experience of fellowship is built upon the foundation of the sharing together by Christians of both a vertical and horizontal koinonia. But koinonia is not confined to the

small growth group setting. It is experienced in corporate worship, in the classroom, in the partaking of communion and baptism, and other areas of church life. Koinonia is experienced on a one to one basis as well as within the large group gathering. However, in the writers experience koinonia is most powerfully nurtured and experienced in a small group setting of five to twelve persons in the context of the local church.

Persons are not made to exist alone. Persons need contact in community. The small group setting of the local church has all the ingredients necessary to mid-wife koinonia into experienced reality. The goal of the small group may vary: Bible study, spiritual growth, community involvement, marriage enrichment, etc. But the significance of the small group where persons come to deeper understanding and commitment, lies in the fact that the sense of koinonia is easily nurtured, and released in the medium of the small group setting.

B. Koinonia defined:

Koinonia is a sense of unity, of relationship with a twofold dimension. It has a vertical dimension (the sharing together of Christians in and with Christ) and a horizontal dimension (the sharing together of Christians

in and with Christ),¹ It is not unusual in the local church for the experience of horizontal koinonia to be lacking. This horizontal koinonia needs to be nurtured and experienced as mutual caring, unity, support and service.

The word koinonia attempts to convey the binding unity, support and love both horizontally and vertically that flowed through the Christian community strengthening weak knees and nurturing spiritual growth and service in the world.

II. THE ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES OF THE GROUP SETTING FOR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

There are a number of ways of fostering the enrichment of the marriage relationship in the context of the local church. Marriage enrichment can be dealt with in sermons, it can be discussed and worked with in church school classes. Articles on marriage enrichment can be inserted into the weekly church newsletters. Books on marriage enrichment can be made available through the church library. Pastoral calling, counseling and pre-marital counseling all are mediums through which marriage

¹Alan Richardson, ed. A Theological Word Book of the Bible (New York: Macmillan, 1960), p. 82.

enrichment can be fostered. Each of the above has a unique place and value.

The writer has chosen, as his principle avenue of fostering marriage enrichment, the small group setting involving five to seven married couples. This offers several advantages over working with couples singly, or in large groups, working with one spouse alone, or working with spouses without their mates.

A. Advantages:

Some of the advantages of working with couples together in small groups involve the following.

There is too much "talking to" in the church. The group setting allows a two way dialogue. Because the writer prefers to co-lead marriage enrichment groups with his wife this allows them to dialogue (as a couple) with the group. Feelings, ideas, concerns, and experiences are kicked back and forth. Even though, as leaders, they are in "control" of the group, they experience themselves not as teachers and dispensers of wisdom, but as co-learners and growers. They have their expertise, but they also look forward to being led as well. It is the small group setting that allows two way dialogues.

It is advantageous to have couples in a group setting dealing with marriage enrichment because they bring to the group their everyday patterns of interaction. Their pat-

terns of relating can be observed firsthand. Couples are a lot more honest with their relationship patterns when their spouse is around. Actually, the opposite could be said, they are more honest when the spouse isn't present. The point is this, the reporting of the relationship changes significantly when the spouse is present and thus, the relationship dynamics can be observed firsthand. The firsthand exposure and observation of the relationship is important because it is the revealing of "what is" that enables couples to gain understanding and move toward mutual growth and enrichment.

Koinonia is nurtured in the group setting. In working with couples in a group, a leader is really dealing with a "group of subgroups."² Each sub-group (couple) is an existing unit with a shared past and hoped for shared future. Thus, built into a couples group are islands of existing mutual support. Koinonia does not have to be created out of nothing but can be built upon that which the couples bring with them.

The "intermarital taboo" can be exposed and dealt with firsthand. When David and Vera Mace first began to work with married couples they soon discovered what they

²David R. and Vera Mace, We Can Have Better Marriages (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 126, quoting an anonymous experienced group leader.

termed the "intermarital taboo." The deeper the level at which couples were invited to share, the stronger the resistance. Their conclusion was "that there exists in our culture a taboo, hitherto unrecognized as such, which prevents married couples from sharing their interpersonal experiences with other couples."³ They speculated that the reasons for the taboo might be (1) protection against public humiliation, (2) a safeguard against exploitation of a discontented marriage partner that would be viewed as an easy conquest, (3) it may be linked with sexual taboos because any suggestion of sexual incompetence is deeply wounding to pride, and (4) it could reflect the traditional view that the family is a closed in-group.

Whatever the reasons for the taboo, it exists and blocks couples in growing in their marriage relationship. It is the group setting that sets the atmosphere whereby this taboo can best be exposed and the mutual support be obtained to gradually let the barriers down and dissolve this wall between couples.

The group setting for marriage enrichment fosters a sense of common empathy (we are all in the same boat together) and a common purpose (we are all working toward the same goal - marriage enrichment). Individual isolation and couple

³Ibid., p. 127.

isolation is a hindrance to growth and enrichment. To know that ones problems are not unique and are shared by other couples reduces anxiety and fosters a sense of togetherness. To know that your goals of enriching and enhancing marriage are shared by others lowers the walls of separateness and nurtures communion.

A result of working with couples in groups is that couples themselves become "growth agents."⁴ In the Christian community each person is called to be a "growth agent," to be a helper and healer. The uniqueness of marriage enrichment groups is that spouses are linked together to become a single growth-agent unit. The spouse-leaders become a model of a well functioning marriage and couples become helpers of other couples. To be linked with a spouse is to heighten the unit resource over the sum of each spouse resource added separately. A couple becomes a team and the team is more effective than each spouse working separately. To see couples emerging into growth teams helping one another is to witness the emerging reality of koinonia.

Couples, because they are sharing in the common experience of the marriage enrichment group and share in its common goal, can continue the growth and enrichment process between group sessions. Each has someone to work with, to practice with, to receive feedback from, to help and be

⁴ Howard J. Clinebell, Jr., The People Dynamic (New York: Harper and Row, 1972), p. 62.

helped by, between sessions. Spouses do not go home as individuals, but as a social unit.

The assignment of reading homework isn't too successful, but encouraging couples to continue practicing the skills they have been working with at a particular group session and assigning couples specific tasks to keep notes on for reporting back to the group is practical and useful. Couple groups lend themselves to nurturing growth and enrichment between sessions.

Lastly, when the marriage enrichment process is started in a couple, that process often continues after the termination of the group. One of the goals of a marriage enrichment group "is to help each marriage become an ongoing two-person growth group."⁵ Often the mountain peak experience of individuals in a group setting is met by isolation and indifference in the world at large after the group discontinues. There is a big let down because no one "understands or shares my discoveries." Couples terminate marriage enrichment groups as a "social unit" of two. They take with them common experiences, learnings, excitements, pains, joys and goals. This two pronged unit of lively koinonia sets the stage for the continuation of the enrichment process. The group,

⁵Ibid.

even after formal adjournment, can continue nurturing the enrichment process by periodically gathering the members together throughout the year for updating and sharing.

B. Disadvantages:

There are disadvantages as well as advantages of the group setting to nurture marriage enrichment. Some of the disadvantages encountered include the following.

The group setting means that the total number of couples that can be worked with will be fairly small. The Sunday morning sermon that deals with enriching marriage reaches a far greater audience. A pastor in a local church has only a limited amount of time to devote to the ministry of marriage enrichment. This means possibly only one or two groups a year involving approximately twelve couples.

As long as marriage enrichment ministry is concentrated in the small group setting it means many persons will never participate because they are threatened by the context of the small group. Small groups mean close contact, exposure, sharing and caring. Many people in the local church are frightened by this kind of exposure. Basically, they are "happy" the way they are and don't want to move out of the rut. But since they have never experienced life as anything but a rut they are not aware of their condition or of their potential. Their main hope is not exposure to a small group but exposure to good preaching.

Another disadvantage of the group experience for marriage enrichment is the disappointment of the unmet rising expectations. Some couples slip into an enrichment group that should not be there. Marriage enrichment groups are basically for healthy married couples only. Some couples slip through the screening procedure who really need marriage counseling. Their inner hurts are too great to be dealt with in a growth group setting. When the group terminates they are disappointed that benefits were not forthcoming. They might possibly blame the leader-couple, or what is more likely, they might blame themselves and load guilt onto their already existing disappointment.

The marriage enrichment group is by nature a limiting group. It limits itself to married couples, and it is further limited to couples with healthy marriages. This leaves out singles, widows and widowers, and persons who want a growth group but whose spouse refuses to be involved with the fellowship of the church. Too much emphasis in a local church on any kind of limiting group, will have a tendency to surface jealousy. "The church is always doing something for couples," or "When is the pastor going to lead a group I can be involved in," become periodic complaints. Continued emphasis on marriage enrichment is a reminder, to those who can't participate, of their own loneliness and need for an intimate marriage relationship.

C. Conclusion:

When the disadvantages are weighed against the advantages the latter far outweigh the former. The church has a profound opportunity to nurture marriage enrichment on a large scale. No other institution has access to so many potential couples ready for marriage enrichment. The group setting for marriage enrichment offers the most intensive kind of skill development. Marriage, as an institution, as a recognized and accepted covenant union, is being challenged due to the failure of so many couples to actualize their relationship-potential. Marriage can be an invigorating, need satisfying, joy producing experience. It is the small group setting that offers the greatest potential of the greatest number of persons to begin to really experience what they had always hoped for - a lively and meaningful marriage.

CHAPTER IV

THE MECHANICS OF LAUNCHING AND LEADING

A MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT GROUP

IN THE LOCAL CHURCH

I. LAUNCHING

A. Publicity:

The first item of business necessary in order to launch a marriage enrichment group in the local church is publicity, getting the word around. I begin by writing a notice in the church newsletter announcing that a marriage enrichment group is to begin and interested couples are to contact the pastor. Other communication channels are the Sunday morning worship bulletin and making announcements from the pulpit. I also make personal contact either by phone or making home visits on couples who might be potential participants in a marriage enrichment group.

All publicity and personal communication emphasize the fact that the marriage enrichment group is designed for couples who are satisfied and happy with their marriage. Howard Clinebell's definition of a good marriage is: "A good marriage is one in which the couple have more things

they like about each other than they dislike." Just about all couples find this definition humorous and one to which they can identify. Some couples unconsciously reveal their anxiety when joining the marriage enrichment group by making sure that everyone knows that they have a good marriage and therefore, qualify for the group. There is no loss of couple esteem as long as it is emphasized that the group is for couples with good marriages.

In the initial announcements I make no mention of the time or the day of the week the group will meet. As each couple expresses an interest I ask them what evenings during the week they would prefer to meet and which evenings are completely out of the question. By the time the six couples are lined up, due to the process of eliminating the absolutely out evenings, I have established the one evening in the week that all are able to attend. This process means that no couple wanting to attend is eliminated due to the group meeting at an inconvenient time.

B. Selection:

This is a problem and will always be a problem in a local church. As long as the marriage enrichment group is publicized throughout the church from time to time there will be couples who want to join who do not qualify by having a good marriage at present. A lot of problem

couples are eliminated when it is recognized that both spouses have to attend the group meetings. Probably a number eliminate themselves when the good marriage definition is publicized. I have no experience yet in terms of turning a couple down. I have had one couple that participated that shouldn't have. What they needed was marriage counseling which I undertook following the termination of the group. While they were in the group I simply "controlled" the wife's hostility, permitting some to surface but ignoring and deflecting much of it. Because of this control the couple did not turn the group into a negative experience for the rest of the couples.

A possibility of dealing with a couple that shouldn't join would be to suggest that they come in for marriage counseling with the pastor emphasizing that the couple will find this more rewarding than they would find the group.

C. Size:

I would suggest that the optimal size for a marriage enrichment group would be six couples. Six is an even number and the group can be divided into sub-groups of two or three couples each. I like to do a lot of sub-grouping for directed exercises and the even number is important. I would be willing to take four couples to make up a group but not more than six. Groups should be kept small to facilitate participation by all.

D. Time and Duration:

My experience is that a group should be no less than two hours in length. Two to two and a half hours is an effective length of time. On any given evening if more time is needed to complete needed tasks after the designated adjournment time, the decision to extend the time needs to be contracted by all the couples. Each couple has the freedom to opt out of the time extension if need be. It is important to close the meetings on time, any exception needs to be contracted by the group.

E. Place:

For me, the best place to lead a group is in a private home. A private home provides an intimate atmosphere and refreshments are handy. The informal intimate atmosphere of a private home is a definite asset in establishing needed rapport and experiencing koinonia.

II. LEADING

A. Team leading:

I think marriage enrichment groups need to be led by husband and wife teams. The pastor and spouse would make a good team as long as they have a healthy, satisfying relationship. The leaders do not have to be clergy and spouse though, lay couples in the church could learn to lead a group.

David and Vera Mace have trained lay couples to lead marriage enrichment groups and they have worked out very satisfactorily.¹ A great deal of caution needs to be taken in selecting and training lay couples to lead groups. It is important that the lay couple participate in several marriage enrichment groups themselves, have a growing and satisfying marriage, and co-lead groups with the clergy team before having a group of their own to lead.

Whether clergy or lay couples lead a group, it is important that a husband-wife team lead. Couple participants will be able to identify with the couple-leaders and the leaders will be able to model the dynamics of their relationship.

B. Contracting:

At the first meeting of the group the process of contracting needs to be entered into. The group needs to decide the roles and expectations by which it functions. A definite starting and stopping time needs to be agreed upon. I like to establish the fact that the group needs to be given top priority and all members will attend unless emergencies arrive. If one or two couples cannot make a meeting in the future schedule the group can recontract their meeting

¹David R. and Vera Mace, We Can Have Better Marriages (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1974), p. 136.

dates to accommodate previously scheduled and important commitments.

The concept of confidentiality needs to be explained and agreed upon. People can say outside the group what they have said, experienced and learned, but can speak for no one else.

The point of contracting is that rules are not so much laid out by the couple-leaders as worked out and agreed by the group.

C. Style of leadership:

Every couple-leader has their own unique style. The important thing is that the couple-leader feel comfortable with their style of leadership. Leading a group needs to be a constant learning process in terms of developing increased leadership competency.

Clyde Reid's description of three basic leadership styles is helpful.² The first is the "highly focused expert leader." This is the lecturer who has all the answers and distributes knowledge to willing subjects. This style is appropriate in some circumstances but not for a marriage enrichment group. The second is the "resource person" style. The resource leader offers his opinions when it is appropriate, but refrains from dominating the group. The

²Clyde Reid, Groups Alive - Church Alive (New York: Harper and Row, 1969), pp. 77-79.

third style Reid calls the "parental" leader. This style provides structure, sets limits, stimulates interaction, and gradually enables group members to grow to the place where they share the leadership functions of the group. The leader acts as a nurturing parent.

As co-leaders my wife and I never lose control of a group. An outside observer might think that at times control is vested in the group members, but my wife and I never lose control. This is our style and we feel comfortable with it.

We also feel it needs to be established that we are not experts or specialists (whatever this means). We are participating facilitators. We move and direct the group, give the group permission to set its own direction at times and participate in the group as learners. Marriage enrichment is for both members and leaders.

D. Trust:

One of the greatest hindrances to successful leadership is anxiety or apprehension regarding whether leadership abilities are competent enough to make the group worthwhile or successful. A leader team worrying over its ability to pull off a "success" will surely defeat itself. A leader team needs to trust, trust that both seen and unseen healing growth, and enrichment will take place. Trust needs to replace success anxiety. A leadership team needs to be open

to changes and refinement in their own style but realize that the Holy Spirit is alive and well. A team needs to let go and let the unseen forces do their work of love and growth.

E. Intermarital taboo:

Somewhere near the beginning of the group, preferably the first meeting, it would be wise to bring out into the open the intermarital taboo. The taboo has its value but the strictness with which it is maintained is often self-defeating.³ Discussing the taboo in the group will help dissolve it. Another approach would be for couples to take newspapers and magazines and make a collage of their marriage. Debriefing the collage would go a long way toward lowering the walls of the taboo.

F. Openness:

The principle of openness needs to be both taught and modeled by the leader-team. There are only two things that a person has to be open with: thoughts and feelings. Thoughts and feelings are not unique to a person, but the organization, awareness and dynamic of thoughts and feelings are unique to each person. Thoughts and feelings are amoral, neither good or bad, and it is "OK" to own one's inner dynamic.

³Mace and Mace, p. 127.

To share one's uniqueness, one's inner self, one's thoughts and feelings requires risk. The deepest conviction of a lonely person is that once they are fully revealed and known they will not be accepted or loved.⁴ Only by being open, removing the mask and experiencing the person rather than the personage will it be possible to experience grace. A marriage enrichment group needs to be the process of becoming open. In this way can love get to the center of persons as well as marriages and work its healing and fulfillment.

G. Listening:

A leader team needs to learn the art of listening carefully, accurately, sensitively, and deeply to each person in the group that expresses themselves verbally and non-verbally. This kind of listening to another needs to be modeled to group members who often do not listen to each other. To keep quiet while another is talking does not mean one is listening. But often not even this occurs and a number of people are talking all at once. It is not unusual to find two or three conversations going when a group is supposed to be focused on a person or couple. The leader team needs to call attention to the lack of listen-

⁴ Carl Rogers, On Encounter Groups (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), p. 114.

ing, help the group to discover what is going on, and facilitate the learning of listening. To be "with" another in listening affirms another's worthwhileness, their importance and validates them as persons. To listen deeply is to love and that is what a marriage group is for.

H. Understanding:

To hear what a person says and to know what they mean may be one and the same, or may be quite different. To understand calls for effort, feedback, and checking out messages. To understand calls for a leader team to be aware of the pitfalls of the communication process and to check out meaning where there is any question in their mind that they may not understand the communicated meaning of another. I had one group member accuse me of being stupid because I was making a particular effort to understand one group member who was speaking in "clear language" but to me was communicating confused messages.

I. Support:

A leadership team needs to be aware of the idea and reality of support. To support another means caring for and being with another whenever they are in pain in joy, or in the combination of the two which often marks breakthrough and growth. To be "at center" (Corlis and Rabe) with the other particularly when they are frightened

or hurting and to give them some sign, verbal or non-verbal, that one cares and is a companion to them in the midst of fear or pain is to "support." Support, by a leader-team, creates the possibility of turning a hurtful moment into a peak experience of Christian love and growth.

J. Silence:

Silence can have many meanings: confusion, withdrawal, avoidance, integration, grace, etc. The important thing is that marriage enrichment group leaders need to be comfortable with silence. To be anxious with silence and step in with words, humor, or directives may interfere with whatever positive forces are at work in silence. My attitude toward silence is that all silence is pregnant with meaning. To be comfortable with it facilitates the discovery of meaning and movement, but to be anxious with silence tends to block its potential.

K. Confrontation:

A marriage enrichment leader team needs to have confrontation as one of their resources of leadership. Confrontation means "leveling," or "speaking the truth in love." Confrontation means pointing out what one considers immature behaviour patterns, verbalizing one's own irritation and here and now resentment. Confrontation can be damaging if not handled properly so the leadership team

needs to know what they are doing before they attempt to use it. But the basic principle is valid, "speaking the truth in love."

L. Debriefing:

An important group leadership principle to become familiar with is termed debriefing. After a directed exercise or at the closing of a group meeting the couples are asked to share what they have experienced and what insights or meanings they have discovered. Impression needs to become expression. Insights and new awareness expressed becomes clarified, firmed up and strengthened. Also, debriefing allows an opening for unfinished business to surface and to be dealt with. If a marriage enrichment group is doing its work old patterns of relating are continually being shaken up. At any given group meeting there is more work to do than time or sensitivity to do it. Debriefing at least opens the door for the most pressing unfinished business to be addressed before adjournment.

M. Grace, I-Thou dialogue, encounter, at center, meeting, contact, peak-experience, ecstasy:

All of these terms are very similar in meaning, but the first one, grace carries the added significance of the vertical dimension of life. From time to time a marriage enrichment group will experience these high moments when

insights come, walls are broken down, fears released, anxieties dissolved, the dynamic of growth freed and love finally given, accepted and mutually experienced. These moments cannot be planned or manipulated into being. They are simply experienced. They are a gift. To experience these moments is to walk on sacred grounds and to be in touch with the living reality of koinonia.

N. Get going:

A marriage enrichment leadership team can never learn all there is to know about leadership and growth facilitation principles. Learning how to love in a group setting is a never ending process. There comes a time when a couple desiring to lead a marriage enrichment group needs to set aside their hesitancy, anxiety or inadequate feelings and simply get going. A team learns in the process of doing.

CHAPTER V

SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES
AND EVALUATION TOOLS FOR MARRIAGE
ENRICHMENT GROUP

The overall design of a marriage enrichment group and the actual design for any given meeting can take many forms. In designing a group the leader-team needs to take into consideration the needs of couples, and the purpose, content, methods and resources of each session. The leader-team also needs to employ evaluative tools periodically to be sure they are accomplishing their goals.

This chapter suggests activities and evaluative tools for marriage enrichment groups. The activities are not ends in themselves. They are designed to awaken and heighten couple involvement. Learning comes not only in the process of carrying out the activities but also in couple and group debriefing of the activities.¹

¹The basic sources of the activities came from Howard and Charlotte Clinebell, Frank Kimper, David Chamberlin, Herbert Otto, David and Vera Mace, William Lederer, Don Jackson, David Knox, and Leon and Antoinette Smith. In most cases the source of the suggested activity is not specifically mentioned because many have been reworked by the writer of this paper. However, when the activity has been kept intact, the source has been given.

The activities are often adaptable to various methods of approach. The leader-team needs to decide which methods to employ for specific activities: total group discussion, sub-group discussion in twos, threes, fours, fishbowl, men sharing, women sharing, spouse or non-spouse sharing, employment of fantasy, drawing pictures, making collages, etc.

I. SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES

A. Getting Acquainted:

1. Question: "How do you feel about being here?"
2. Share favorite:

Time	Holiday
Season	Vacation
Literature	Music
Room	Bible Book
Academic Subject	Bible Character
Pastime	Sport

Share first time tried to:

Swim	Smoke
Date	Dance

Guess another's favorite:

Magazine	Sport
TV Show	Animal

3. Share: (1) dreams for future, (2) what you do for fun, (3) what you have gotten excited about lately.

4. Share: anxieties and expectations you have regarding the marriage enrichment group.
5. Cut from magazines - newspapers pictures that convey a facet of your personality. Hang pictures around neck, mill, share.
6. Couples draw symbolically most important thing happening in their marriage now. Other couples try to interpret the message.
7. Draw, how marriage has changed over the years.
8. Share: (1) earliest memory, (2) greatest joy of childhood.

B. Love:

1. Discuss the nature of love.
Discuss: love as seeing another as precious.
2. Have group shut eyes, be silent, get in touch with:

- | | |
|--------------|---------------------|
| (a) thoughts | (b) body sensations |
| (c) feelings | (d) actions |

Group repeats:

I am the doer - but not the deed.
 I am the thinker - but not the thought.
 I am the speaker - but not the speech.
 I am the writer - but not the letter.
 I am the cook - but not the meal.

3. Affirm strengths of others.

Begin sentences with "I appreciate about you..."

4. Point out difference between:
 - (a) "I appreciate" and
 - (b) "I see you as precious" (I love you).
5. Mill, take hands, look at another, say:
 - (a) Regardless as to whether I see your mind as brilliant or dull - I see you as precious.
 - (b) Regardless as to whether I see your actions as responsible or irresponsible - I see you as precious.
 - (c) Regardless as to whether I see your feelings as joyful or painful - I see you as precious.
 - (d) Regardless as to whether I see your abilities as superior or inferior - I see you as precious.
6. Claim love symbolically.
7. Mill: give love non-verbally.
8. Strength bombardment - spouses and non-spouses.
9. Group fantasize gift and target person - share - repeat around the group.
10. Focus on behavior
 - (a) What behavior do you consider "loving."
 - (b) How do you say "I love you" in your behavior.
11. Give spouse a back rub.
12. Spouses - eyes closed -
 - (a) touch and explore hands, wrists, elbow, shoulders, neck, ears, face, hair.
 - (b) communicate caring in the process.
13. Loving Forfeits²
 - (a) each spouse compile a book of twenty-five

²Herbert A. Otto, More Joy in Your Marriage (New York: Hawthorne Books, 1969), p. 25.

- "loving forfeits."
 (b) Give to mate to redeem when desired.

C. Communication:

1. Discussion

- (a) Women discuss, "What spouse can do to improve communication."
 (b) Men discuss same question.
 (c) Debrief all together.

2. Discuss:

Communication involves:

- 2 persons - sender, hearer
 2 levels - rational, emotional
 2 kinds - verbal, non-verbal

3. Discuss: communication involves:

- (a) statement
 (b) acknowledgement
 (c) acknowledgement

Practice - debrief

4. Sabotage communication by:

- (a) person tells of days events
 (b) spouse interrupts, mocks, takes double meaning words the "wrong way", etc.

5. Group takes and debriefs

"A Marital Communication Inventory"³

6. Spouse role play partners non-verbal way of communicating anger, happiness, sadness, fear, nervousness.

³Millard Bienvenu, A Marriage Communication Inventory, for M & F (Family Life Publications, Box 247, Saluda, NC 28773).

7. Role play silently emotions: elated, hopeful, sad, mad, anxious, afraid, nervous, hurt, disappointment, resigned. Group members guess emotion conveyed.
8. Spouses, eyes closed, touch hands only to:
 - (a) get acquainted
 - (b) dance
 - (c) fight
 - (d) make up
 - (e) say good bye
9. Share significant events and feelings during the day.
10. Draw - positive and negative happenings of our marriage now.
11. Draw - ten marriage peak experiences.
12. Homework suggestion
Couples contract fifteen minutes a day for next seven days to communicate with each other.

D. Need:

1. Distribute chart of Maslow's basic and self-actualizing needs.⁴ Group discussion, have people select where they are on the chart, debrief.

⁴Frank G. Goble, The Third Force (New York: Grossman, 1970), p. 50.

2. Presentation of the P-A-C dynamic of trans-actual analysis. An emphasis needs to be placed on the natural rhythm of persons needing to nurture, to depend on and to assume responsibility. Role play P-A-C. One spouse with eyes closed is fed finger foods by mate, dependence and nurture is modeled and experienced.
3. "Intentional Marriage Formula"⁵ (Clinebell)
 - (a) "I appreciate in you..."
 - (b) "I need from you..."
 - (c) Settling on a complimentary need and contract couple needs fulfillment.
4. Fantasy: (1) pain of first five years, (2) pain of teen years, (3) pain of previous year, Couples, debrief and symbolically convey understanding and caring.
5. Draw what you would really like to do but haven't been able to yet.
6. Possibly homework: couples are to spend one hour the following week to let their hair down and do whatever they want to that comes to mind.

E. Sex:

1. Group discussion of Herbert Otto's theological

⁵Howard Clinebell, intentional marriage formula, from his graduate course, "Marriage Counseling and Enrichment" - AM 246, School of Theology at Claremont, Spring 1974.

concepts of sex.⁶

2. View video tape "Sexuality and Communication."
3. Group discussion: The Myths of sex in marriage.
4. Book review: Howard and Charlotte Clinebell's The Intimate Marriage, chapter seven, "Increasing Sexual Intimacy" and Alex Comfort's The Joy of Sex.
5. Possible homework: Herbert Otto's "Love Life Development Test."⁷ Couples should take the test and debrief it between sessions.

F. Husband-wife role expectations:

1. The group could complete and discuss the, "Marriage Role Expectation Inventory."⁸
2. Fantasy - role and sex change for a day.
3. Couples, switch responsibilities for a weekend.
4. Sex stereotypes, group to complete the following:
 - (a) women are....
 - (b) men are
 - (c) evaluate and debrief

⁶Otto, p. 108.

⁷Ibid., pp. 157-164.

⁸Marie S. Dunn, Marriage Role Expectation Inventory, Form N & F (Family Life Publications, Box 247, Saluda, NC 28773).

5. couples, complete a series of sentences beginning with "I expect from you...."
6. Men and women in separate groups discuss, "How can I be me and be married?"

G. Conflict:

1. A couple gets in touch with an inner resentment, then is guided through the following conflict resolution formula:
 - (a) "I resent"
 - (b) "I demand"
 - (c) "I need"
 - (d) "I appreciate"
2. "The Fallen Domino"⁹
 Couples to complete the sentence:
 - (a) "One thing that angers me most about you is"
 - (b) Contract resolution on a quid-pro-quo basis. Complaints need to be specific, reasonable, and correctable.
3. Affirm persons
 - (a) share positive and negative criticism.
4. Fish bowl:
 - (a) "What I do with my anger"
 - (b) "What my mate does with his anger"
5. Discuss and role play P-A-C as a tool of conflict understanding and resolution.

⁹ William I. Lederer and Don Jackson, The Mirages of Marriage (New York: Norton), pp. 205-210.

H. Intimacy:

1. Complete and share the following:

I am the happiest when....., right now I'm feeling....., When I feel rejected I....., Things that turn me off are....., my favorite room is....., I go to church because....., my strongest point is, my weakest point is, you need....., I like best about you....

2. Fill out "Marital Intimacy Checkup" list.¹⁰

3. Share last feelings of

- (a) draw symbolically personal or marital blockage that you would not reveal in a group setting.
- (b) draw symbolically a facet of self or marriage that is exciting that you want to share.
- (c) Draw symbolically a facet of self or marriage that you would be reluctant but willing to share.

Debrief contact with inner censor.

5. Fantasy gift giving involves the group fantasizing gifts each would give to a target person. The target person rotates to include all present.
6. Share hurt and pleasure.
7. Draw a marital life-line pointing out high and low points of marriage.
8. Group discussion, "Increasing marital intimacy."

¹⁰ Howard J. and Charlotte Clinebill, The Intimate Marriage (New York: Harper and Row, 1970), pp. 37-38.

I. Joy:

1. Fill out "Turn On-Turn Off Certificates."¹¹
2. Discuss P-A-C transactional analysis theory to get in touch with the "playful child."
3. "Biweekly Paradise."¹²

Couples pick one day a month and cater to the whims and desires of their spouse that day.

4. "Surprise Fun Folder."¹³

Couples are to start keeping a folder made up of newspaper clippings, magazine clippings, entertainment ads from radio and T.V., and their own creative ideas relating to activities that would be enjoyable to do. Periodically the folder can be delved into for creative ideaa of what "we can do now."

5. For further activities see Chapter Iv, VII JOY.

J. Spiritual intimacy:

1. Draw present feeling about God, the Bible, the church. Debrief.

¹¹Otto, p. 130.

¹²Ibid., p. 133.

¹³Ibid., p. 122.

2. Write a paraphrase of I Corinthians 13.
3. Draw a spiritual history life-line.
4. Group participation in silent or sentence prayers, meditation, and fantasizing various events of Jesus life.

K. Goals:

1. Couples fill out "Marriage Habit Analysis Chart."¹⁴
2. Complete the following:
 - (a) "I want for me..."
 - (b) "I want for you..."
 - (c) "I want for us..."
 - (d) Contracting needs, goals.
3. Draw symbolically:
 - (a) What our marriage looks like now.
 - (b) What I hope it would be in six months.
 - (c) List two things that one can do to move the marriage from (a) to (b).
4. Couples to write obituaries of how they want to be remembered. Debrief meaning of values, dreams, goals communicated.
5. Discuss and affirm marriage and life accomplishments to the present.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp. 170-171.

II. EVALUATION TOOLS

An important aspect of a marriage enrichment group that a leader-team needs to consider is providing opportunities for group members to evaluate the experience. The leader-team cannot objectively evaluate the group experience without feedback from the group members themselves. The leader-team, strictly speaking, are not group members, they are member-facilitators. This difference limits objectivity and necessitates the team-leaders to be open to, and collect evaluation input from the group members.

Evaluation can take two forms, one verbal and one written. Each group meeting needs to be closed with a few minutes of general debriefing of the evenings experience. During this time the leader-team can ask one or two questions designed to give them evaluation input. Typical questions might be: "Did you discover something about yourself or your spouse this evening that you hadn't realized before?", -- "Was there something left undone tonight that you would have liked to have gone into more thoroughly?" -- "What is your feeling response as you look back over the evening?" Evaluation questions can also be posed periodically throughout the evening, but whether the questions come during or at the end of the group session they should be brief because the primary purpose of de-

briefing is not evaluation but picking up and closing unfinished business.

At the last session an evaluation form should be handed out to the group members. The form can be filled out during that meeting or the group can be asked to fill out the questionnaire sometime during the following week and then return to the leader-team. Group members can make the questionnaire anonymous or sign their names. It makes no difference and the choice is theirs.

The group needs to be told that the purpose of the evaluation form is to help the leader-team come to an objective evaluation of the group experience and, thereby, make changes that would help couples in future marriage enrichment groups. A sample evaluation form is as follows:

Personal Evaluation of the
Marriage Enrichment Group

Your comments are appreciated and will help to improve future programs.

1. List up to three meaningful experiences you had as a part of the marriage enrichment group and describe why you found these experiences profitable.
2. Has your marriage relationship started to change as a result of the marriage enrichment group?
If so, briefly describe the changes.

3. Was the number of group meetings
- (a) too many _____
 - (b) too few _____
 - (c) just right _____
4. What changes would you make in the group that might improve it?
5. What changes could the leader-team make in their style of leadership that you would see as being helpful?
- His:
Hers:
6. Was there a dimension of marriage not covered by the group that you would have liked to have seen the group deal with?

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

Following the introductory chapter presenting a historical context, chapter two attempted to set forth the theological and psychological basis upon which the enrichment of marriage is made possible. Love and growth are the theological and (humanistic) psychological grounds of marriage enrichment. A basic conclusion of this paper is that love and not growth is the most basic source of human motivation. Consequently, marriage will have a greater chance to grow when it is moved by the desire to love than when it is moved by the desire to grow. Marriage has a better chance for enrichment when a couple value love (as defined in this paper) more highly than psychological growth. A synthesis of the theological and psychological rationale for marriage enrichment is stated simply: marriage needs to be a process of growing in Christ-like love.

A crucial thrust of this paper is that love in the Christian context is basically an attitude, not a feeling or an action. Many researchers and scholars, both within and outside the theological dimension, would criticize this thesis and few persons and marriages function on the

premise that love is an attitude, a way of seeing. The attitude or perception that is love is the attitude that says, "I see you as precious just as you are." A conclusion of this paper is that schools of medical-psychological therapy lack the depth of understanding of the nature of love that the Christian theological concept of agape embraces.

Another important facet of love presented is that love addresses and sees as precious not the functions or manifestations of self, but sees as precious the self as such. The self is the inherent "imago Dei" and its essential worth is derived from the nature of God Himself and not from the self's functions. Consequently, love in marriage demands nothing except to accept reality (the precious nature of persons) and thus, in marriage or in any relationship there is never any reason or excuse for not loving. Marriage enrichment finds its motivation and fulfillment in love.

Chapter three attempted to set forth the advantages and disadvantages of using the small group setting in the local church for the purpose of marriage enrichment. Marriage can be enriched in many settings other than the small group but a basic advantage of the small group setting is that the resultant intimate dialogue nurtures the emerging of koinonia and it is koinonia that creates an atmosphere that helps a group fulfill its goal of enriching marriage.

Chapter four deals with the dynamics of leading a marriage enrichment group. Leadership is a personal dynamic. After a leader team examines the warehouse of leadership styles which will hopefully be all rejected by them as unsatisfactory, they will design their own style. The evaluation key to leadership style is "Does it get the job done of nurturing marriage?" The method is judged by its own results. Thus, a leader team needs always to be open to feedback and corrective changes. Leadership is an open ended process. At the same time a leader team needs to accept the fact that each couple is responsible for their own learning. The leader team lives in constant tension between the poles, (1) leadership is judged by its results and (2) everyone is responsible for their own learning.

Chapter five dealing with the tools to implement growth is based on the perspective that people learn not only by discussing but by doing and experiencing as well. Learning springs from a dynamic engagement of mind, feeling and action. Chapter five leans too far in the direction of experiencing and doing but this is to counter the trend both in the education clergy and scholastic community of "cerebral overstimulation." Agape is handicapped until it touches mind and feeling and completes itself in some style of overt manifestation.

The enrichment of the marriage relationship is an important dimension of Christian ministry. The field is young and the research limited, the potential good warrants increased investment of persons both within and outside the context of the church.

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